This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

GEORGE HAMILTON PERKINS

★ COMMODORE U. S. N. ★

CARROLL STORRS ALDEN

THE

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

PURCHASED FROM THE

JAMES OWEN PROUDFIT FUND

FEB 5 1918

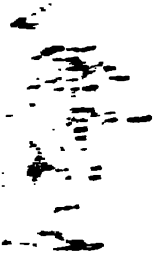
GEORGE HAMILTON PERKINS

Commodore, U.S.N.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

G. W. Perkins



NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

EORGE HAMILTON PERKINS

COMMODORE, U.S.N.

His Life and Letters

BY

CARROLL STORRS ALDEN, PH.D.
INSTRUCTOR IN ENGLISH, U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY

WITH PORTRAITS AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1914

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.
R 1914 L

COPYRIGHT, 1914, BY CARROLL STORRS ALDEN

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Published March 1914

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

TO

MRS. LARZ ANDERSON

DAUGHTER OF THE GALLANT OFFICER

WHO IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS WORK

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

PREFACE

BECAUSE a young naval officer was constantly thinking of home and because his family treasured his frequent letters, this book has been possible. The letters were informal and unstudied; being subject to constant interruption and other unfavorable conditions, they frequently did not possess literary distinction; but they were ever full of hearty feeling, and of keen interest in routine duty as well as the stirring events of war and conflict. By reason of their spontaneous, straightforward character they have a value as history.

Miss Susan Perkins, who all her life had been collecting the letters, edited them in 1886, with a biographical sketch of her brother by Admiral G. E. Belknap. The work was well done, and it shows throughout a sister's love and admiration. Still I have felt that there was a place for further work. Miss Perkins's book was published privately and reached the family friends rather than the general public; as it was written thir-

teen years before the Commodore's death, it did not deal with the last phase of his life and could not treat with fulness many matters of a personal nature. In my writing I have constantly had Miss Perkins's book before me. At the same time I have gone over the originals of most of the letters she quoted, and have included some others which had become accessible later; also I have availed myself of the rich historical and biographical material of a general character that has appeared since her book was written, throwing light on the events in which Commodore Perkins had a part.

Miss Perkins's noble life is ended, and to her I cannot speak my gratitude. To Mrs. Perkins, widow of the Commodore, to Mrs. Anderson, his daughter, and to a score of others, his relatives and friends, I hope the following pages will be the best expression of my deep appreciation of their assistance and encouragement in the various stages of this work.

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND,
February, 1914.

CONTENTS

I. Family and Boyhood 1

II. At the Naval Academy 16

III. In Central and South American Waters 37

IV. On the West African Coast . . 71

V. The Capture of New Orleans . . 107

VI. In the West Gulf Blockading Squadron 134

VII. The Battle of Mobile Bay . . . 172

VIII. Later Service 206

IX. The Sailor-Farmer 256

X. The Measure of the Man . . . 289

Index 297

ILLUSTRATIONS

George Hamilton Perkins. Photogravure. *Frontispiece*

From a daguerreotype taken in 1855, when he was twenty-three, and a miniature.

Birthplace of Commodore Perkins, Londonderry (Hopkinton), New Hampshire. 2

From a photograph.

Clara Barrett Perkins, mother of Commodore Perkins 11

From a miniature by J. J. Hier.

United States Gunboat *Lavaca* 108

From a lithograph published in 1870.

Captain Bailey and Lieutenant Perkins facing the Mob at New Orleans 222

From Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, May 31, 1862.

United States Monitor *Chickasaw* 274

From a war-time photograph, reproduced in "A History of the American People," by Woodrow Wilson. By permission of Harper and Brothers.

Captain G. H. Perkins 254
From a photograph, 1884.

Commodore G. H. Perkins 264
From the painting by Vinton.

U.S.S. Perkins. Launched, 1910 290
From a photograph, 1911.

GEORGE HAMILTON PERKINS

GEORGE HAMILTON PERKINS

COMMODORE U.S.N.

CHAPTER I

FAMILY AND BOYHOOD

IF the laws of inheritance have a force in the shaping of character, and a man's fortune is thus in the making long before his birth, George Hamilton Perkins was favored in his antecedents.

He was in direct line from the Reverend William Perkins, who, sprung of an old Warwickshire family, was born in London and came to Boston in 1632. William Perkins, according to the early records, was a "man of parts," and had unusual versatility. He gave fifty pounds to the Massachusetts Bay Company and received in return four hundred acres of land. He was elected representative to the General Court of Massachusetts. Besides attacking the strongholds of evil from the pulpit, he commanded a military company and was a member of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company in Boston. Still better, he had a large family. His spiritual enthusiasm for the

latter is not without a touch of humor for us, when he writes on the marriage of Katharine, his second daughter: "She was the first which the merciful Providence of God gave me opportunity to be disposed of in marriage." He died in 1682 at the age of seventy-five.

Timothy, great-grandson of William Perkins, married Hannah Trowbridge, and through her George Perkins was descended from Thomas Trowbridge, of Devonshire, who came to America in 1636. Also through her he was descended from Increase and Maria Cotton Mather.

The first generations of Perkins in America lived in Roxbury, Gloucester, Topsfield, and neighboring towns in eastern Massachusetts. But as the country became more thickly populated, there was the reaching-out for more land. Roger Eliot Perkins (1769–1825), grandfather of the subject of this biography, moved from Middleton, Massachusetts, to Hopkinton, New Hampshire. Building there some lumber mills on the Contoocook River, he established a profitable business. Prompted by the English gentleman's pleasure in an estate, he obtained large tracts of land reaching out from the present village of Contoocook. Here, a few hundred yards from the river and mill, he built the

BIRTHPLACE OF COMMODORE PERKINS, CONTOOCOOK (HOPKINTON), N.H.

large and stately mansion that still stands on the edge of the village. In this house Commodore Perkins was born, and when a small boy he could look out and see in all directions only the paternal acres. This pleasure in land and farm country does not seem to have been so strong in Hamilton Eliot Perkins, father of the Commodore, but was to reappear in the Commodore with undiminished vigor.

Hamilton Perkins received his education at Exeter, Norwich Military Academy, and Harvard Law School. For many years he gave his attention to lumbering at Contoocook where he owned one or more mills. For sixteen years in the latter part of his life he presided over the probate court of Merrimac County and was known the country about as Judge Perkins. Senator W. E. Chandler says of him: "He was not only genial, full of kindly humor, but he was brave and plucky — a positive man from whom George must have inherited much of his natural courage."

Clara Bartlett George, wife of Judge Perkins and mother of the Commodore, was also of good old English stock; her ancestors had come to America in the seventeenth century, settling in Haverhill, Massachusetts, and also the Middle

of the eighteenth century had moved to Hopkinton. Her paternal grandmother was the daughter of Captain Harriman, — a skipper of Salem, — while her grandfather was Captain Benjamin Emery, "Gentleman," who commanded a company at the battle of White Plains in the Revolution. Mrs. Perkins's brother was Captain Paul R. George, long an intimate friend of General Benjamin Butler. General Butler, knowing of the remarkably efficient service of Captain George as quartermaster of volunteers in the Mexican War, immediately, on being given command of the forces at New Orleans in 1862, requested that Captain George be appointed quartermaster on his staff; but because of political opposition in Congress the nomination was not confirmed.

Mrs. Perkins had among her early devoted admirers the talented young lawyer, Franklin Pierce, later President of the United States. Throughout his life Pierce continued a friend of the family, and when the youngest son, John H. George, on the death of his father, left Dartmouth a year before graduation, Pierce took him into his office; the youth thus favored later became one of the most brilliant lawyers in New Hampshire.

Hamilton and Clara Perkins had two daughters and six sons. The second child and the eldest son was George Hamilton Perkins. He was born in Hopkinton, New Hampshire, October 20, 1836. Here in the house already mentioned as built by his grandfather he spent his early years.

George Perkins was ever fond of this, the south central part of New Hampshire, and to a large extent it was the mould that shaped the man. It is agricultural country and the land is still extensively cultivated, being adapted especially to dairy farming. Though lacking the austere grandeur of the mountainous parts of the State, Hopkinton and the adjoining towns of Warner and Webster are not less varied and lovely. Mount Kearsarge, Sunapee Mountain, Monadnock, Moosilauke, and on exceptionally clear days the White Mountains are to be seen from the hills — the nearest of the mountains being twelve miles distant. The hills, which in many less rugged States would be honored by the names of mountains, are so placed as to show their height to advantage and they afford picturesque views of the Contoocook River and smaller streams. Contrasted with the rough hills and the heavy woods are the rich intervales, where unsurpassed

meadows and some good grain-fields are to be seen.

George Perkins was an active youngster on the farm. He was interested in whatever was being done, and made friends and companions of all the workers. He had a great liking for animals and pets of all kinds, as had the others of his family; indeed, this fondness for animals was so marked that it may be regarded as a family trait and seems to have come from the Georges. For horses he had a veritable passion, and this lasted all through his life.

One of his earliest recorded adventures was with a horse, and the incident, which his sister relates, is important because the child shows the same characteristics that later were to make him the superior officer. When scarcely as old as the boy of to-day who wakes to consciousness of masculine dignity because of his first knee breeches, he went to the pasture to catch one of his father's colts. It was a spirited animal, full grown, and its head was so high that the boy was not tall enough to reach it. The colt eluded George for some time, and then taking to the river crossed over to the other side. As the field bordered on the Contoocook above the dam, the stream was of some

depth and breadth. The small boy, however, did not hesitate, but, throwing off his scanty attire, he plunged in and swam to the opposite bank. There he cornered the horse against a fence, and by climbing the rails succeeded in fastening the bridle, which he had placed about his own neck on crossing the river. Then, swimming the animal back, he put on his clothes and rode in triumph to the stable. Just as later in the battles below New Orleans and in Mobile Bay, he was without fear. Difficulty and danger were for him like a game and brought out his quickness in action and his ready resource.

The father constantly encouraged him in self-reliance. When he was six and it was imperative to send some one through the deep snow to Concord, ten miles distant, George was tied in the sleigh, and though all alone, made the trip without mishap. Early he had a pony of his own, and with his father he would take long rides over the rough hills and through the heavy woods. At times they would spend the night in a small and very old house in Webster on a farm belonging to the judge, and would fish in the beautiful little lake which the farm overlooked, or hunt in the vicinity. The farmhouse, known as the "Box," in

later years was to receive many additions, and eventually became the summer home of the Commodore.

When George was eight years old, his father moved to Boston where he engaged in the West African trade. The boy saw the extensive shipping, and doubtless had his imagination fired by many a sailor's yarn as he roamed over the vessels his father was fitting out. Yet there is nothing to indicate that the child or his parents recognized that the sea was to be his profession. Indeed, when two or three years later his father tired of business cares and city life, it was a glad boy that returned with the family to the large and comfortable old home in Hopkinton.

George's education was early found to be a serious problem. He did not take to books. Augustus T. Perkins, who comes of an entirely different branch, in writing of his own family, notes what is fully applicable to the family of the judge: "Of well-educated and accomplished men and women we have a plenty, but almost no scholarship in the strict sense of the word"; and he mentions as their particular characteristics, "The love of adventure, of field sports and of athletics . . . together with an extraordinary vigor

of body, noticeable in the women as well as the men." Thus it was that George, who loved action and all outdoor life, had no enthusiasm for books and study.

Because of this indifference he made little progress, and the teachers commonly agreed that he was dull. Had it not been for the faith and perseverance of his mother, his distaste would have crippled him for life, and there would have been no public career. She took his education upon herself, in spite of the many cares of a large family and an extended circle of friends. Many a spirited contest followed, for George would not study and the mother would not let him shirk. Frequent were the petitions for leniency. He was not feeling well, he wanted to go with father to Tilton to buy a horse, or he must see a litter of pigs just arrived on a neighboring farm. Might he not accompany Sister Hattie, who had shopping to do in Concord? If he would work all day tomorrow, might he not go fishing this morning with some of the older boys? — There were times when undoubtedly he was not feeling entirely well. He was not robust, and was quite alert enough to see how this fact might be used to advantage. Fortunately, Mrs. Perkins had herself a liking for

play and a lively appreciation of the importance of the many interests connected with the farm. Recreation was not forgotten because of study, and most of the privileges desired were granted if preceded by faithful application. Progress was slow, but in the end the mother triumphed and George gained some schooling.

There is still preserved a journal which Mrs. Perkins induced George to write during his eleventh year. It shows how many and active were the interests of the busy, helpful boy; it also expresses a pathetic lament that his mother should hold him so strictly to his books. It was hard for him to understand how she could be so blind to the better things of life. The following are some extracts (the form has been somewhat modernized by Miss Perkins, sister of the Commodore): —

Thursday. — It has rained all day and taken off some of the snow. I did my lessons and took care of Black Hawk and the other horses, because the man had to go away. In the afternoon I sold a horse, and then I carried a man in the sleigh to Mr. Gould's on business.

Friday. — This afternoon I took Black Hawk and Mr. Stanley, and Roger took Uncle Paul's horse and David, and we went to the lower village to an exhibition. We had a very pleasant time till we got 'most

CLARA BARTLETT (GEORGE) PERKINS
Mother of Commodore Perkins

home, when the thills dropped down on Black Hawk's heels and he tipped Mr. Stanley and me out of the sleigh, and got away from us and ran almost home. I took the other sleigh and went after him and led him home, and the only harm done was he corked himself a little. Thus closed the labors of the day! I lent four chains to E. Burbank, two binding and two ox chains, and one axe; and to William Leslie, two horse chains, one ox chain, and a goad stick.

Monday. — I did not expect to study any to-day, as Frankie is sick, but mother saw me go by the window and called me in, and of all the scoldings that she has ever given me I got one to-day the worst. To-day I have set some hens, and I expect to have a great flock of chickens, ducks, turkeys, and geese this year, for I have set a good many.

Interesting as showing the practical methods used to promote scholarship is this entry: —

My mother solemnly agrees to give *George H.* Perkins one loaf of cake, if the said George *H. Perkins* goes through his geography in ten days.

MOTHER *Perkins.*

George's further education was at the Hopkinton and the Gilmanton academies, the latter one of the three oldest in the State. He did nothing to distinguish himself at either institution, and the reports of scholarship were not flattering. The teachers for the most part did not understand the boy, and the routine of study failed to arouse his interest.

George's struggles suggest those of the British naval officer and author, Captain Marryat. The two in early and later life exhibit many characteristics in common. Marryat as a boy made but slow progress under his schoolmasters, and the unusual and desperate methods he resorted to in the acquisition of knowledge are worthy of a Yankee. It is related that in one of these earnest endeavors to lay hold on truth, he was discovered in an erect but inverted position, feet high in air. When called sternly to account for not studying his lesson, he explained, "Well! I've been trying for three hours to learn it on my feet, but I could n't, so I thought I would try whether it would be easier to learn it on my head."

While George was studying at Gilmanton, being fourteen years old, there came an unexpected offer of an appointment to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. Although every boy is at heart a soldier or sailor, there is no record that George had seriously thought of a naval career before this. However, the history of New Hampshire had been such as would enkindle patriotism. The Granite State, though possessing less than twenty miles of seacoast, early made

much of her one harbor, Portsmouth. Here in the Revolution, the *Ranger* had been built, and the crew, led on to victory by Paul Jones, were many of them from the Piscataqua region. Here in the War of 1812, the *Enterprise* was fitted out as she sailed forth to capture the *Boxer;* and also the second *Wasp*, which under the gallant Blakely harried British commerce so fearlessly in the English Channel, was built and provided with a crew. And here in the Civil War the *Kearsarge* was to be built, named after the mountain twelve miles from Hopkinton.

It was the Hon. Charles H. Peaslee who offered the appointment to the Naval Academy. He was Congressman from the Concord District, and having a vacancy to fill he sought out Judge and Mrs. Perkins, — he had been long a warm friend of the family, — making the suggestion that George should go to Annapolis. There followed some anxious deliberation and weighing of advantages. The parents recognized the value of the thorough and practical education that the Academy was already making a name for. They saw that for one of George's active temperament a naval career was in many ways admirably suited. Yet they hesitated before taking a step that

would remove their son, still a mere boy, from their sight and influence.

When it was decided that George should accept the appointment, he was withdrawn from Gilmanton and placed under a private tutor at Concord to prepare for the entrance examination at the Academy. This, like the examination for West Point, was far less exacting than at the present time.[1] It had been recognized that the test must be of such a character that candidates from States where the schools were not of the best might hope to pass. Otherwise the charge would be made that the institution was a rich man's school, for which only those who had enjoyed unusual privileges could qualify. As we turn to the "Regulations of the U.S. Naval Academy, 1853," we read,—

> Candidates must be over fourteen and under sixteen years of age at the time of examination for admission; must be of good moral character, able to read and write well — writing from dictation, and spelling with correctness — and to perform with accuracy the various operations of the primary rules of arithmetic, viz.: numeration, and the addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers.

An eccentric schoolmaster in Concord under whom George studied before he went to Gilman-

[1] Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, p. 71.

ton seems to have been the only teacher besides his mother who had the gift or the patience to discern promise of unusual power in the boy. However, he passed the mental examination for admission to the Academy without difficulty, and after undergoing the physical test with like success was enrolled as an acting midshipman. He entered upon the first stage of his naval career at the beginning of the academic year, October 1, 1851.

CHAPTER II

AT THE NAVAL ACADEMY

PERKINS'S life at the Naval Academy cannot be regarded as extraordinary. As in earlier years, he showed indifference or aversion to study, and more than once he but narrowly escaped "bilging." [1] He was extremely popular with his fellows, but because he was not aggressive he never constituted himself their leader. To-day a man with his qualities would gain distinction in athletics, dramatics, and like branches of student activities which have an element of seriousness in their character. In the absence of such interests in the fifties, he doggedly pursued his course and was graduated the lowest stand man in his class. He was probably the last man also that his companions would have picked as the one to win distinction six years later for exceptional efficiency and bravery.

The United States Naval Academy was at the

[1] *Bilging:* the expressive term by which, in the fifties as now, midshipmen refer to the untimely end of those seriously deficient in scholarship, when their fate is that of a ship bilged; that is, run on the beach, lying on her bilges, her bottom broken, a wreck.

time of Perkins's admission entering upon the seventh year of its work. Previous to the founding of the sister institution at West Point, in 1802, the idea of a naval school constituting one of the four departments of a military academy had been suggested. This probably originated in the fertile brain of Alexander Hamilton, but it came to nothing. From the beginnings of our navy until 1845 (the year the Academy was founded at Annapolis), midshipmen acquired their slight book education commonly from chaplains and schoolmasters on shipboard.

Naturally the first years of the institution, for which there was no model, were somewhat experimental, and the work was limited in its scope. The school was merely a station where midshipmen, during a few months' respite from sea service, might with assistance study for the examination confronting them as they sought promotion to the grade of passed midshipman or of lieutenant. The Academy quickly demonstrated its value, and in 1851 it was decided hereafter to limit the sea duty of acting midshipmen to summer practice cruises and to the period following their training at Annapolis. Immediately on appointment they were to enter upon a course of

study at the Academy that should cover four consecutive years — the plan still followed.

The change that has come over the spirit of our colleges in the past half-century does not have its parallel in the Naval Academy. As has been frequently observed, studies in the former do not, as of old, form the central and absorbing interest; and reading and recreation, while in some phases more healthy and sane, are for the most part less aspiring and idealistic. In Annapolis, on the contrary, the life has become more serious. As the United States Navy has risen in self-esteem, and the midshipmen are three or four years older on admission, they seem to feel more fully the dignity of the service. It is certain that discipline is superior to what it was fifty or sixty years ago; courses of study have been broadened and a greater degree of application is required. It would be misleading, however, to suggest that the earlier and younger midshipmen did not work, and the final results speak well for their training.

There were six departments of instruction when Perkins entered the Academy, and two years later they were increased to eight. The following is a list: (1) Naval tactics and practical

seamanship. (2) Mathematics, navigation, and astronomy. (3) Natural and experimental philosophy; mechanics; steam engines. (4) The theory of gunnery, field artillery, and infantry tactics; the art of defense, including fencing. (5) Ethics, rhetoric, geography, history, international and military law. (6) French. (7) Spanish. (8) Drawing.

Among those permanently attached to the academic staff at this time was Professor Henry H. Lockwood, U.S.N. He had been at the Academy since its founding and had been one of the master spirits in organizing the courses. He began with teaching mathematics and natural philosophy, but when Lieutenant Dahlgren after a few lectures on gunnery gave up his department in disgust, Lockwood (who was a graduate of West Point and had served with distinction in the Florida campaign of 1836–37) immediately took up the more technical work. He drilled the midshipmen in light artillery and simple infantry evolutions. This they strongly resented. The traditions of the navy had all been against the sailors' touching even thus remotely upon the domain of the soldiers. The experiment had been tried with the bluejackets and their unwillingness

had caused it to fail. Loud were the murmurings of the midshipmen because of Lockwood's innovations, and on St. Patrick's Day they hanged him in effigy from the Academy flagstaff. But he kept on with the drills and finally succeeded.

There is an incident often related that shows how spirited was the conflict, in which the midshipmen would obstinately slouch and stand on one leg in the most unsoldierly fashion while Lockwood sought to bring them up to West Point standards.

One day, while drilling the midshipmen in field artillery, he started them off in the direction of the Severn River. When the head of the column reached the steep embankment on the shore, Lockwood tried to give the command, "Halt!" but, unfortunately, his tendency to stutter just at that moment asserted itself. "Haw — haw — haw," he shouted, but the word would not come. On went the battery over the bank — there was no sea-wall then — and into the river went the guns. The youngsters who manned the drag-ropes were preparing to swim across when the belated order at last arrived.[1]

The régime had become better established by 1851 when Perkins arrived on the scene, and progress was marked during the latter part of his course in Superintendent Goldsborough's admin-

[1] Benjamin, *The United States Naval Academy*, p. 185.

istration. Still it was the youthful, scarcely formed Academy of which he was a part.

Foremost among those who imparted sound traditions, and at the same time aroused mischief, were the "oldsters" — midshipmen who, according to the early provisions of the Academy, came after several years of sea service to prepare for examination. They were senior by five or ten years to the "youngsters" (those entered in 1851 or later and taking the four years' consecutive course), and some of them had served in the Mexican War. It was chiefly owing to their influence that there was no hazing (unlike West Point and most of the colleges). But they had been accustomed to considerable freedom and found it hard to conform to Academy regulations. The youngsters followed their lead and got in trouble by card-playing, drinking, and "frenching" — leaving the Academy grounds without permission, usually after nightfall, by scaling the walls.

Midshipman Perkins, with his active nature and fondness for all kinds of fun, found much to lure him from study. The influence of home and his naturally high instincts kept him from dissipation, but in nearly all the innocent pranks he seems to have had a part. He was reported for

a fair number of offenses, but evidently for not nearly all of those actually committed. He attributed his lucky escapes to the fact that he was a little fellow and was quite hidden under "Old Goldy's" huge figure, as the inquisitorial eye of the stately Superintendent sought out the authors of mischievous pranks and irregularities.

The following from the Conduct Roll, 1853–54, are some of the reports made against him: "Room not swept before prayers"; "Absent from roll call"; "Light in room after taps"; "Playing chess in room during study hours"; "Greasing the floor of his room"; "Visiting after taps"; "Skylarking when marching up to recitation"; "Injury to public property (filing gas-burner)"; "Boxing in the porch of mess hall"; "Ink spilled on floor of room"; "Visiting the kitchen at 9.50 P.M."

Entertaining his friends or visiting after taps was a particularly common offense on George's part, for he was ever sociable. "Greasing the floor" was incidental to some rich "feed" indulged in after the officer-in-charge had presumably gone to his rest.

Admiral Mahan, who entered the Academy the same year Perkins was graduated, remarks on the manner with which the officers at the naval school

treated the midshipman pranks.[1] Probably most of them, although recognizing the duty of enforceing regulations, sympathized with the youthful exuberance of spirit; and considered the matter of detection and reporting as a game in which they did not mind being occasional losers, provided that the midshipmen did not trespass on the standards of a gentleman. On the other hand, the midshipmen had no personal feeling against the officer catching them, provided he used only what they regarded as fair means. The lieutenant who inspected at unusual hours, or put on rubber shoes so as to give no notice of his approach, was the subject, in the private conversations of the midshipmen, of much condemnatory eloquence. In sharp contrast was such an officer as John Taylor Wood. It is related that as he came into a building he would tap on the steam pipes and then wait a few minutes before beginning inspection. It is needless to say Wood found little to report, and perhaps enough midshipmen appreciated his generous treatment so that the number of offenses was not really increased.

What object Midshipman Perkins had in filing his gas-burner, for which he was twice reported,

[1] Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, p. 56.

we can only conjecture. There was some game connected with it, perhaps of the character which Dick Prentiss, killed at Mobile, is said to have taught his classmates. He would place a handkerchief over the burner, and, blowing into the pipe until he was black in the face, put out the gas in the rest of the building.[1]

We get an idea of the daily routine to which Perkins had to adapt himself on entering the Academy from the report of the Board of Examiners, October 10, 1851:—

> Before breakfast the students are required to make up their beds, and clean out their rooms. . . . At 7.15 A.M. the students attend prayers, and at 7.30 go to breakfast. At 8 A.M. recitations commence and continue until 1 P.M.; are resumed at 2, and continue till 4 P.M. From 4 P.M. until sunset, exercises either at great guns, small arms, sword, or field artillery. Immediately after dress parade the students go to supper. Dinner at 1 P.M. during the session. Study hours from 8 A.M. to 1 P.M., and from 2 to 4 P.M., and from 7 to 9.30 P.M.; at 10 P.M. the lights are put out.
>
> There are no academic studies on Saturday, but the forenoon of that day is devoted to military exercises. The afternoon is devoted to recreation, one half the students being permitted to visit the city, and the other half allowed to sail or row boats, or amuse themselves about the grounds of the Academy.

[1] Davenport, *On a Man-of-War*, p. 240.

In general the daily programme of the early fifties is that of the present. Midshipmen are now roused by the morning gun and reveille at 6.30, end their study with the evening gun at 9.30, and, putting out their lights, turn in at taps sounds at 10. The one important innovation is the period of liberty from 5 to 6.30 in the afternoon, when nearly all the midshipmen engage in some form of athletic sports. Whatever may be the opinion as to the benefits or injuries of the great contests in football and rowing, there can be no question as to the excellent results of the recreation period at the Academy. It has undoubtedly strengthened and purified the life, and, while increasing the general happiness and enjoyment, has not on the whole [illegible]

In Perry's time [illegible]
hours when [illegible]
of sailing, [illegible]
often be [illegible]
— [illegible]
visiting in [illegible]
[illegible]

In these [illegible]
midshipmen [illegible]
by [illegible]

songs of their own devising. The poetic muse was not very strong, and but few of the songs were worth recording. One of the most popular and spirited was that in anticipation of the long leave of absence which comprised the whole of the second summer of the course, sung to the tune of "The Wearing of the Green": —

Come all ye gallant middies
Who are going on furlough,
We'll sing the song of liberty,
We're going for to go.

Take your tobacco lively
And pass the grog around,
We'll have a jolly time to-night
Before we're homeward bound.

Our sweethearts waiting for us,
With eyes brimful of tears,
Will welcome us back home again
From an absence of two years.[1]

Occasionally there was a dance held in the Lyceum, a room above the mess hall, and there were various little parties given on Saturdays and holidays in the charming Southern homes of the old Maryland capital. Midshipmen were perpetually hungry and the kindly mothers and winsome daughters knew what would please.

[1] Quoted by Benjamin, *The United States Naval Academy*, p. 214.

The close relationship between officers' families and midshipmen has since the foundation of the Academy been one of its happiest features. Most of the officers are furnished quarters in the yard, and no matter how stern and distant the elderly gentlemen in uniform may be, they do not prevent the youngsters from delighting in the friendly cheer of the milder members of the family. Permission to visit officers' quarters is subject to regulation and limited to certain days and hours. It is regarded as one of the privileges, and it has never lost this character by being made too common. The wives and daughters have thus been a strong moulding influence at Annapolis. This has been more marked than at the leading colleges because the lives of the midshipmen are more sequestered.

George Perkins, with his light heart and happy temperament, could join in the social gayeties of Academy life with no ordinary enthusiasm. He was good at sailing a boat, and he particularly excelled in dancing. Indeed, in the latter it is said that, when he had for his partner Miss Kate Ray, a sparkling belle and a great friend of George, there was such poetry in the motion that many another dancer thought it worth while to stop and

look on. If the hops were simpler than at the present time, they were scarcely less spirited. Elderly women, the beauties of *ante-bellum* days, indeed uniformly affirm that they were much more attractive: the programme was not so set and formal, and the company was small enough so that practically every one could know every one else. "Little Puck," as Miss Ray had dubbed Perkins, was as popular with the girls as he was with the midshipmen, and if there had been no such thing as study, he would have been supremely happy. As it was, he did not allow low marks to make him noticeably serious or melancholy.

When George had been a year at the Academy, he found an agreeable change in duties afforded by the summer practice cruise. The sloop of war *Preble* had been given to the naval school a few months previous, that the midshipmen might have what would correspond to West Point's annual encampment. The *Preble*, under Lieutenant Thomas T. Craven, the commandant, went on the first practice cruise to the West Indies and the Madeiras. Next summer George sailed again under the same officer to Horta, on the island of Fayal; then to Corunna, on the north coast of

Spain; and then to Funchal, Madeira. According to instructions, Lieutenant Craven kept at sea as much time as possible, making short visits at a few ports only as it was necessary to obtain supplies.

After eight months of continuous routine and classroom work, the midshipmen hailed the cruise as a welcome relief. The prospect was doubly attractive to those who had never traveled, yet who looked upon the sea as their own particular element. Much followed, however, quite out of harmony with the romance of the sailor's life. The food was the regulation navy ration and of so poor a quality that the midshipmen went half starved. Since they were given practically no spending money, it was not uncommon as they touched at a foreign port for them to sell articles of clothing or even their sextants to buy something to eat. It took time to adjust themselves to sleeping in a hammock, compared with which the hardest bed at the Academy was luxury. But if the midshipmen's affection for their hammocks lacked strength during the first days of the cruise, it grew very rapidly when they were summoned at midnight, or at four in the morning, to climb the ratlines and reef a sail while the ship was

pitching and all was cold and dark. The midshipman occupied rather an anomalous position; he was neither an officer nor a sailor, but he was given most of the duties of both. Admiral Mahan says: —

> Ashore or afloat, we made our own beds or lashed our own hammocks, swept our rooms, tended our clothes, and blacked our boots; our drills were those of the men before the mast, at sails and guns; all parts of a seaman's work, except cleaning the ship, was required and willingly done.[1]

Hardships had to be encountered, and it is not certain that the officers did not permit some that were rather unnecessary, that the youngsters might be weaned from luxuries and taught endurance. There is a story told of a midshipman of the old time who approached Commodore Thomas Ap Catesby Jones and ventured humbly to remark that the quarters in the steerage were uncomfortable.

"Uncomfortable, sir, uncomfortable!" thundered the grim old warrior. "Why, what blanked fool ever joined the navy for comfort?"

There was also the other side. Whales, dolphins, and other monsters of the deep, strange sails and occasional glimpses of strange people,

[1] Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, pp. 101, 102. Copyright, 1906, 1907, by Harper & Brothers.

made the young sailors forget their sorrows. Most of the midshipmen knew little of the waters and lands they visited. In consequence the yarns spun in the animated groups that collected, during the hours of freedom, on the forecastle were all the more wildly imaginative. With these tales were joined some fragments of real information that came from the few bluejackets and warrant officers on board; they treated the midshipmen in a respectful manner, for these lads might soon be their commanding officers, yet there was also considerable friendliness and familiarity between them.

The drills varied from day to day according to the watch the midshipmen belonged to. All during the cruise they received their training in knotting and splicing, in making and taking in sail, in heaving the lead, etc. Also they were required to make drawings of yards, masts, and sails, explaining the position and use of each rope. They had practice in preparing the ship for action; they were organized in gun crews and had almost daily gun drills with a fair amount of target practice. In the second summer, the first class men, who had the experience of the previous cruise, were instructed in the duties of sailing-

master. During the day they took charge of the deck, and gave orders for tacking, wearing, or boxhauling. They made their observations, and calculated the latitude and the longitude. On reaching Chesapeake Bay they had frequent practice in bringing the ship to anchor and getting her under way.

The general excellence of the midshipmen in target practice was a surprise to Lieutenant Craven and to the Navy Department. In this, Perkins distinguished himself. His exceptional skill occasioned an article in a Baltimore paper and the article was copied in the New Hampshire journals. I quote, however, from a letter George wrote to the home people: —

We had target practice one day, and it came my turn to shoot. There was quite a swell on at the time, which made it difficult to get any kind of a shot, but when I fired, I hit the target, which was a barrel with a small flag on it, thrown out about three quarters of a mile distant. Such a thing as hitting a target at sea with the ship in motion and a swell on is considered almost impossible, so they all said it was luck. But another target of the same size was put out at the same distance, and when I fired again I tore this all to pieces. Then the crew all cheered and made quite a hero of me, but still some said it must be luck; so a third target was put out, of exactly the same kind, and in exactly the same manner. This one I did not quite hit,

but my shot fell so near that all agreed that it was *not* luck, but that I was a first-rate shot with broadside guns. Since then I have been looked upon as having a very correct eye for distances, and am always called upon to fire whenever experiments are made.

The academic year began the 1st of October. In returning from the first cruise the *Preble* sped along under favorable winds and reached Hampton Roads about September 11. Lieutenant Craven, however, was enjoined by Superintendent Stribling to continue the practice and drills in Chesapeake Bay and not to arrive in Annapolis before September 27. This precaution was taken to guard against numerous requests for leave that midshipmen or their parents might be tempted to make.

Instead of making the month of September one of liberty, that midshipmen might annually visit their homes, — the present system, — the plan introduced in 1854 was to grant one leave during the four years, a leave that should include a whole summer, commonly at the end of the second year. One can imagine the ecstasy of the little home-loving George Perkins on receiving this long leave, June 15, 1854, when he had been away from home nearly three years.

He should at that time have been within a year

of graduation, but alas, he had undergone many tribulations. He was not blind to the fact that poor scholarship was likely to sever once for all his connection with the navy. His letters home frequently intimated that he expected to "bilge." He spoke of the unhappy prospect, however, without melancholy, and cheerfully proceeded to discuss various other possible careers.

In February, 1853, the semiannual examinations were "stiffer than ever before," and later there were many dark forebodings expressed of what would follow. On the 25th of that month the expected doom descended. Secretary of the Navy Kennedy, in a letter to Superintendent Stribling, directed that those midshipmen who had been found deficient at the late examination — the enumeration was of considerable length and in it appeared the name of George H. Perkins — should be "dropped from the list and returned to their friends."

Nor did misfortunes come singly to Perkins. Just before this he had met with an accident, of the nature of which we are not informed, and was taken to sick quarters. This accident, however, had the fortunate result of delaying matters at a critical time. Superintendent Stribling writes to

Secretary Kennedy on February 28: Perkins "received a severe injury more than a week ago, and is unfit to travel; I have withheld his letter of dismissal until I could submit his case to you."

There was a reconsideration, and Perkins, instead of being "returned to his friends," was directed to continue his studies with the next lower class. This lengthened his course at the Academy a year, but fortunately for the navy he was graduated in 1856.

Another midshipman of this time, who later was to attain great distinction, was also having a hard struggle. George Dewey, who entered in 1854, came very near leaving in consequence of his first June examination. He was unsatisfactory in conduct, geography, and history. A moderately good grade in mathematics saved him.

Commodore Phythian, one of Perkins's classmates, and later superintendent of the Academy, tells of Perkins's career as a midshipman: —

> He should not have been turned back; he had ability but did not study. He was the most popular man in the Academy, full of life and spirits. From sheer of his superabundant life he was always breaking regulations and getting into scrapes. Indeed, as a man he seemed almost reckless and daredevil.
>
> While Perkins was the most popular man in the

Academy, he was the most modest. He lacked confidence especially in his mental abilities. For example, I remember he put a problem on the board correctly; but as he turned about and saw a classmate laughing as he thought at his mistake, he rubbed his work out.

George Perkins's lack of success at the Academy was because he had not learned to grapple with the disagreeable and win the sweet pleasure of mastering what unmastered must be continuous annoyance and vexation. He had to undergo the discipline of long and dreary cruises in Central American and West African waters before he stood forth the strong and efficient man. Perhaps the most significant incident of his career as acting midshipman was his success in target practice on the summer cruise. It showed the sharp eye and the cool nerve that were to mean so much a few years later at New Orleans and Mobile Bay.

CHAPTER III

IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICAN WATERS

THE discovery of gold in California caused Nicaragua and Panama to leap into prominence. The journey from Missouri across the plains required a whole summer and entailed the severest hardships. A much easier route was by way of Central America. The Accessory Transit Company, organized by Cornelius Vanderbilt, could under favorable conditions take a passenger from New York to San Francisco in nineteen days. The itinerary was: New York to Greytown, Nicaragua, by ocean steamer; across the isthmus chiefly by lake and river steamers, a few miles being by coach; and then north by ocean steamer to San Francisco. Upwards of 20,000 people traveled this route in a year. Not as many at first went by Panama, for the more southern route necessitated three days longer at sea. When, however, in 1855, a railway was completed between Aspinwall (Colon) and Panama, and a revolution occurred in Nicaragua, the Panama route grew in popularity.

The people living in the towns on both routes were of a desperate character. The more enterprising (not a few escaped criminals from the States) kept hotels, and they all made their living by preying on those going to or from California. As a naval officer who spent three months on this coast wrote, "They resembled the old buccaneers in everything save courage." In view of these conditions, Secretary of the Navy Toucey ordered in December, 1856, that two ships should take their station at Panama and a sloop of war at Aspinwall, "to afford protection to the persons and property of the thousands of our countrymen crossing the Isthmus, from the violence of an ungoverned population." The sloop referred to was the *Cyane*, and among her junior officers as she sailed from Boston, November 5, 1856, was Midshipman Perkins.

He had just come from a visit at home, but that made him no less reluctant in venturing out on his first long cruise. He was never given to melancholy, yet there is a frequent touch of homesickness that appears in his letters. He begins a journal letter to his mother on November 9:—

We left Boston last Wednesday afternoon, and had a fine breeze out of the harbor. Everything bid fair that

I should not be seasick and I went to bed as happy as I could under the circumstances: for I was thinking of you all and comparing one of your good rooms and beds to the cramped up steerage and hammock. During the night it came on to blow, and as I had the morning watch, I received the full benefit of the gale; and was n't I sick! I am afraid there is very little left of your good living.

How often I wished that I had never chosen such a profession and that I had never left home. All that day it continued to blow, but the next was pleasant, and I somewhat recovered. The sickness, however, hung on for a long while, and I should certainly have deserted had the ship touched land. During my long night watches I am always thinking of you at home. I have never missed my home so much as I have since I last left it. . . . The weather is rather warm, for we are now in about Latitude 30° N., but to-day is rainy and a heavy sea runs. I am writing to you in our dark little hole, where one solitary tallow candle is burning.

We have a great deal to do on board this ship. I am in charge of the "spirit room," but never fear! the whiskey is so bad that I could not touch it, if I was so inclined. I am also in charge of the magazine. But if we get into a fight you need not be alarmed unless the ship gets on fire, for in action I am below the water line and no ball can reach me. So you see your hopeful George is quite safe from the whiskey and the cannon balls.

Sunday, November 16. — I suppose you are all getting ready for church. If I was at home I do not know but that I should go. We have no church here. Sunday in ten fathoms of water is never regarded. So there is scarcely any Sunday for the sailor; still, he seems to be a good fellow.

Our darkie is making bread in the steerage. You would laugh to see him work, but unless you became very hungry I think you would eat very little of the bread. It is rather heavy, but we manage to down it. We scarcely ever have any dessert; when we do, it consists of boiled dried apples mixed with bread and whiskey and then baked.

Friday, November 21. — We have been becalmed for the past few days and have succeeded in passing the time rather pleasantly. We have caught a good many dolphin — and fishing for them is grand sport. During the evening we generally go on the forecastle and hear the men sing, fiddle, and play other instruments. Until eight o'clock you would almost imagine you were on board a music box.

Sunday, November 23. — I have been trying to go to sleep ever since dinner but have given up in despair, for it is so warm that it seems as though I should suffocate. If this wind holds we shall be in Aspinwall next Tuesday, for we have had the full benefit of the northeast trades. The ship is rather uncomfortable, and it rains nearly every five minutes.

As it is the Sabbath, everything is very quiet. This morning a man was sentenced by a summary court-martial to four days of solitary confinement in double irons with nothing but bread and water for food; then he will have thirty days of extra duty. This sentence was for impertinence.

Aspinwall and the Isthmus were new and interesting country to George. The rainy season was hardly at an end and there was a miasma that hung over the town. At the first opportunity,

however, he went ashore. It was a hard life that he saw; there were a few haggard, bilious-looking Americans in white, smoking perpetually — they were the traders, the hotel-keepers, and the bartenders; there were also mulattoes from Jamaica who had shops; while the largest part of the population (of about 800) were coal-black negroes from Jamaica, who constituted the laboring class. The negroes, both men and women, went about half naked, while many an infant was carried on its parent's arm or played in the mud, clothed only in its innocence. All who had been there for any length of time, including even the dusky children, were victims of fever. The following is George's description of the place as he writes home: —

It is an awful hole. The town is built on a low coral island. There are few Americans here, and they are of a degraded order. The natives are a miserable set of beings, and seem ready and anxious to be in a row with the Americans. There are five rickety hotels (I suppose lumber is scarce) and a few huts. From the marshes comes a very bad odor caused by decayed vegetation.

It has rained nearly every day since we have lain here, and it has been damp and disagreeable all over the ship. To-day, however, is pleasant, and it is my day to go on shore. But as I have nothing of the needful, and as there is nothing going on, I thought I would stay on board.

The steamer will be in in a few days, and I am look-

ing anxiously for a letter. There is always considerable excitement when the steamer arrives, due to the amount of travel. The passengers stay here overnight, and you have no idea what hard cases most of them are. Those that come from California wear revolvers in their belts. Most of them that I saw were a pitiable looking set. Many of them, I should judge, were going home to die.

Anything that would break the monotony and put life into the corpse-like town must have been grateful. But the letters from home, brought by the fortnightly steamers with the gold-seekers, meant more than all else to George. He writes to his sister Susan: —

If you could imagine the joy with which I greet the letters from home you would intercede for me and have many more written.

And similarly to his mother: —

When I do not get a letter I am always afraid you are not well. I try to think that all is right, but I am not exactly easy in my mind. Tell me what you did during the Christmas holidays, and if I can persuade myself that you are only well and happy I will try and be contented.

A week previous to Christmas he secured a little liberty just as a shipload of passengers, bound for California, arrived. With Midshipman Blodgett he boarded the train and went with the

emigrants across the Isthmus to Panama. It was a day of novelty. Even Aspinwall, where for the past two weeks nothing had happened except dog-fighting and cock-fighting, put on an animated appearance with the Stars and Stripes flying from every hotel and drinking saloon. Leaving the town and the glistening Atlantic they plunged into the depths of the forest. For seven miles the locomotive puffed and sent out its shower of sparks through the intricacies of a vast marsh. Here George saw luxuriance of vegetation such as he had never looked on before. On every side were impenetrable mangroves. Gigantic *espaves* and *coratos* rose to a height of one hundred and thirty feet with a diameter scarcely short of ten feet. Even where extensive work had been done on the road-bed, nature quickly had concealed the wounds; decay of fallen timber was almost immediate, and so rapid had been the new growth that a clearing of a year before, except for the absence of the larger trees, showed scarcely a trace. The midshipmen were desirous of seeing, above all things, some of the tropical game. But the pumas, if there were any within miles, refused to appear from their dark retreats, nor did even a curious monkey or parrot come near.

At Culebra, the highest point on the line, dusky ladies with Panama hats greeted them with great friendliness and generously urged their oranges, bananas, and pineapples. The price, incidentally, was four times as high as they would have paid in Boston or New York, but by this time they would have been surprised at anything else.

From Culebra the road made a rapid descent, and soon, as announced by hundreds of cries, the majestic Pacific was in sight. Winding in and out among the cocoanut palms, the train finally stopped almost on the very shore. The trip had been forty-nine miles and had taken four hours and a half.

The midshipmen went to Panama on Saturday and did not return till Monday. This gave them Sunday there, which is always the day of special animation in Spanish countries. Panama was wretched enough, but far in advance of Aspinwall, which could boast of only one white woman. George writes home of having "a very pleasant time," but the only incident he relates is a call he made.

The master of the *Independence* introduced me to a Spanish family, and I passed an hour very agreeably. I did not have much to say, for they could not under-

stand English or I Spanish. One of the daughters was very handsome, so of course I spoke with my eyes.

In Aspinwall time passed slowly, and for the young officer, not enthusiastic over seeing a cock-fight and drinking champagne cocktails, there was little to interest him. On shipboard, however, there were many things contrived for amusement. George writes to his mother on February 17: —

I have just returned from a boat-race, between the captain's gig and the *Dolphin*. I was in charge of the gig and was beaten by about three rods in three miles. It was good sport, and I enjoyed it very much.

He describes the celebration of Washington's birthday on the *Cyane* as follows: —

The ship was dressed in flags and looked very handsome. At meridian we fired a salute and spliced the main braces, that is, gave the men two drinks of whiskey. The wardroom officers gave a blow-out and invited the midshipmen, who are never known to refuse such invitations. It consisted of everything that blow-outs generally do. The captain was very entertaining, but the midshipmen were particularly quiet, and distinguished themselves only when it came time for eating and drinking. Towards night it rained and blew fearfully. The men had smuggled out a great deal of liquor, and the crew were nearly all drunk, but they seemed happy and jolly and were singing all over the ship. Suddenly the singing stopped, and as I was sitting forward I heard whispers pass that a man had

been stabbed. I fastened on to one of the men and made him tell me where the man was. He took me down to a dark hole underneath all the hammocks. I sent for the first lieutenant and a light. We found the man cut very badly, but he was drunk and you know the saying, "A drunken man can't be killed"; so this one is now in a fine way of recovery. The man who stabbed him was found and confined.

George closes with the moral reflection: —

I have no doubt but Washington's birthday is to many people, and in many ways, a day of happiness, but it is also the cause of a great many sore heads.

Midshipman Perkins had far too active a nature to remain cooped up in a ship lying off shore. Two trips by railroad to Panama did not quench his desire to see the wilds. In due time, however, he had an adventure that was quite sufficient. It is narrated in his letter of March 15, 1857: —

I have been twice on shore hunting since I wrote last. The first time I went after parrots and monkeys, but being warned after we had started that the woods were dangerous, we did not dare to go in very far. We were not successful; for in trying to get at some monkeys that we saw, we scared up three panthers, and as I had nothing but shot in my gun and knew that they are very bad when wounded, I was afraid to fire. Deciding that "discretion was the better part of valor," I went to a hut which I saw and which proved

to be inhabited by an old native woman and her two daughters. They were very kind and pleasant, and I passed the afternoon there trying to talk Spanish with them.

When we went hunting again, a few days after, we did not have such good luck. The gunner and I went ashore, borrowed a rickety old boat, and getting all ready, with the exception of something to eat, started across the bay, a distance of four miles. We went across very well, but in attempting to land we found it was dangerous, for the breakers ran so high that they upset our boat. But we managed to land at last, and hauled the boat ashore without much damage.

After hunting three or four hours and having pretty good luck we thought we had better go back. It was now blowing hard and the natives told us to wait till the gale was over. But as it was becoming late and we were afraid that if we delayed longer we should have to stay all night, we decided to get off. We lashed our guns and the natives shoved us well out from the shore, but the moment we tried to sail our boat keeled over on her beam ends and half filled with water. I had the helm and knew everything depended on me; the situation was not very pleasant, for in whatever direction I looked I could see the play of a shark's fin. The boat soon righted, but the wind blew so hard and the waves were so high that we found we could neither return to the shore nor go towards the ship, which was about seven miles away and in such a direction that we should have to run before the wind. Then, whenever we turned towards the shore the breakers drove us on the rocks, which rose all about us. At last we saw a little cove where it seemed as if we might be safe if we could only reach it, and we decided to make for that at

all hazards. We got within forty feet of it, and began to think we were safe at last, when our fore sheet got foul, and a squall just then striking the boat, over she went. If the foremast had not been carried away I do not suppose I should be writing to you now. We had to work hard to right the boat, and all the time we were overboard, which was about two hours, I expected to be bitten by a shark. Meanwhile the breakers were so strong they would continually knock us off the boat. But at last she righted, and we just barely cleared the rocks, landing in the smooth water beyond. We were both nearly exhausted, having had nothing to eat since morning, and it was now eight in the evening. When we got on shore the gunner told me he had been bitten by a shark while in the water, but the bite proved not very deep. We rested a little while and then began to think what we should do.

We found we had landed close to an impenetrable forest, but a river flowing into the sea just there made a little beach where we could move about. We decided to bail out the boat and sleep in that if the wind did not go down. After bailing an hour we had most of the water out of her. As by this time the moon had risen and the wind had gone down, we determined to try again and reach the ship. This time after three hours' sailing we succeeded. When we arrived on board we found the captain and the other officers had been very anxious about us. They were afraid we had been driven on shore among the breakers and lost. The captain had ordered all the boats to be ready at sunrise to search for us. When my companion got on board he was hardly able to walk, but I was only a little stiff the next morning. The natives thought we had a wonderful escape, for the bay is full of sharks.

During the months spent at Aspinwall, Perkins saw much that was the reverse of happiness; he was especially affected by the death of the heroic Lieutenant Isaac C. Strain, a brilliant young naval officer who had performed distinguished service in exploration only three years before.

With twenty-six companions Lieutenant Strain had set out from Caledonia Bay to find the supposedly short route across Darien to the Pacific, which according to two or three published reports, all of them mendacious, was less than thirty miles long, and gave great promise for the path of an inter-ocean canal. The party started with ten days' provisions. They soon became aware, from the unfriendly manner of the natives and from the gross inaccuracy of the maps drawn by the earlier explorers, that they had entered upon a formidable undertaking. For nearly two months Lieutenant Strain put forth heroic efforts in working his way through trackless forests and down an unnavigable river. During the last month, daily facing starvation, he had pushed on with three companions to reach civilization and bring succor to the others, who were scarcely able to move. Their ad-

ventures make a thrilling narrative in which the splendid courage and endurance of the leader might well be compared with that of La Salle in some of his terrible marches in the Northwest. Finally Strain emerged, and finding a settlement, almost immediately started back with a rescue party. When his followers were discovered, five had already succumbed and others died shortly afterwards.[1]

In a letter dated May 17, 1857, George describes this leader's end:—

> Lieutenant Strain . . . was ordered to this ship and came down on the *Illinois* to join us. The steamer arrived in the afternoon, but he did not come directly on board ship and stopped at a hotel on shore. He was almost immediately seized with the fever and died that very night. Only twelve hours after his death he was buried. Twenty hours before his burial he was talking and laughing. He was buried at a place called Monkey Hill, among negroes, in a strange land, where there was no one who cared the least for him. His funeral was attended by a few officers who were strangers to him, and who of course showed but little feeling. Twelve sailors fired a volley over his grave, and three negroes covered him up. Thus ended the days of one of our distinguished naval officers. . . . I wonder what they would do with me!

[1] The story of the expedition is told by J. T. Headley in *Harper's Magazine*, 1855.

The events on the Isthmus that attracted the attention of the whole country in 1856 and 1857 were those particularly connected with the filibuster General William Walker. It was the time when the mild, "gray-eyed man of destiny" was attempting to establish a Napoleonic empire in Central America, the beginning of which he planted in Nicaragua. The unrest that followed was one of the reasons why the *Cyane* and other United States ships were kept in Isthmian waters, and Perkins had a close view at least of the pitiable conclusion.

To go back a little, it happened that in 1854, when Nicaragua was undergoing one of its periodic revolutions, William Walker, a doctor-lawyer-journalist then living in California, had been induced to organize an armed force and join the losing side.

In the first skirmish, occurring in June of the following year, his Nicaraguan allies ran away and he was defeated. In the second, two months later, he won a decisive victory. Seizing one of the Accessory Transit Company's steamers he quickly moved up Lake Nicaragua and took by surprise the capital, Granada. Peace followed and a new government was set up, in which a

Nicaraguan, Rivas, was made the nominal president. Walker, who was appointed commander-in-chief of the army, was virtually in control. Recognizing, however, what little dependence he could place on the Nicaraguans, he determined to introduce thousands of Americans from the States and carry out his ambitious plans of establishing an empire.

For some months Walker's star was in the ascendant and everything favored him. His success was in large degree due to the Accessory Transit Company, of which Cornelius Vanderbilt was the head. Recruits, mounting to thousands, were sent to him, either at reduced rates or with free transportation. The district attorney of New York protested, but as the filibusters were styled "emigrants" and were carried on the same ships as the passengers bound for California, his objections were ineffectual.

Early in his rule, Walker had acted arbitrarily and despotically. The other countries of Central America becoming apprehensive formed a coalition against him and declared war. President Rivas and several influential Nicaraguans, finding their master not to their liking, deserted. Walker, not at all daunted, immediately had

himself elected president and acted only the more openly. He reëstablished the institution of African slavery and expected by this move to gain the ardent support of the Southern States.

He might, indeed, have maintained his power for many years had he not made the great blunder in February, 1856, of breaking with the Accessory Transit Company. Because the company was somewhat slow in making payments due to Nicaragua, he revoked their charter without warning and seized what he could of their property. By this arbitrary action he prevented further recruits or supplies from reaching him, while the Costa Ricans, heading the forces against him, received small and large arms and even some leaders from the Accessory Transit Company. Disease and discouragement, followed by death or defection, now thinned his ranks. Meanwhile the allies were constantly closing in. At the city of Rivas on the Pacific Coast he made his final stand, and the barricades were so effectual that the allies could not drive him out. However, his affairs were hopeless and his followers recognized the situation. Commander C. H. Davis, of the U.S.S. *St. Mary's*, then came to their relief by proposing

that they should all lay down their arms and return to the United States by way of Panama. After a little hesitation, on May 1, 1857, they accepted the offer.[1]

Perkins writes of General Walker's followers as they reached Aspinwall, "A more desperate set I never saw"; and again, "A great many of Walker's men came in here on the English ships and they were in the most miserable condition; many of them were dying with smallpox and yellow fever." In June, his ship, the *Cyane*, was sent to Greytown, on the Atlantic Coast, to bring back some of the filibusters not included in the earlier negotiations. He writes: —

I can give you no idea of the sad time we have had. On arriving at Greytown we found about 120 officers and soldiers in the hands of the Costa Ricans. Most of them were in a horrible condition; many of them were at the point of death; some were covered with wounds, others with disgusting sores, and all were lousy and dirty. We took them all on board, together with several of the officers' wives and children, the latter affording some pleasure. We did all we could for them, but as bad weather set in on the way back to Aspinwall all had a hard time. However, only two died on board. Last night I was called to go out in a boat

[1] See Scroggs, "Walker and the Steamship Corporation," in *American Historical Review*, vol. x.

and bury a man. We went well out to sea, and after I had read a short prayer the sailors threw the body over the side, all saying together, "God bless you," as it sank. It made me feel pretty sober. I read the prayer as well as I could, but never having turned my attention to the ministry as a profession, I suppose I did not do my part in what was just the right manner.

Shortly after this the *Cyane* was ordered north and proceeded to Boston, carrying fifty-three of the sick and wounded filibusters. While still in Central America, George heard that his sister Harriet [1] had a daughter. On the reception of this news he wrote: —

I thought a great deal last night about the new baby, and I do not know but that I ought to write a special letter on her account; yet, although her affectionate uncle has joyfully assumed his heavy responsibility, he feels he is not great at composition. The only thing I could think of doing was to speak for the under jaw of a large shark which they are now cutting up on deck as a present for my niece. I am sure that she is pretty, but I hardly know what to say about a baby.

As the *Cyane* reached Boston George was severely disappointed to learn that her stay would be short and that he should not be able to go home. Devotion to home was all through life

[1] Mrs. William L. Foster, who lived in Concord, New Hampshire.

one of his most marked characteristics. The following letter shows his feeling at this time: —

I could not help thinking, as I walked up and down on the morning watch, how completely I have given up my home, and how little, during my lifetime, I shall be at home and with those I love best. Just think, if I go to the southward again I shall not see you for a year more at least. Then seven long years will have passed since I left you all, and how little I have seen of you in that time. This naval life is pleasant enough for those who have no ties to bind them, and often seems agreeable enough to me, for I have many good friends in the service, and we are often anchored at stations where I am able to see a great deal and to enjoy delightful society. But yet — I wish I could be more at home; and sometimes my only comfort and only cheerful thought is the knowledge that you are all well there.

From Boston the *Cyane* went to St. John's, Newfoundland, and to Halifax; then to Hampton Roads, Virginia; and late in the fall of 1857 was ordered to Cape Haytien to inquire into the case of an American vessel and two American seamen, seized upon suspicion by the Haytian Government. Though the difficulty had been satisfactorily settled before the arrival of the *Cyane*, she remained there a few days and the officers had a chance to see the island. George writes: —

We all went on shore, for the place is really worth seeing. Cape Haytien was built and owned by the French, and was called "Little Paris." In 1842 it was shaken down by an earthquake, and 20,000 inhabitants were buried beneath the ruins. It is beautifully situated on a level plateau, surrounded on all sides by lofty hills, except where it faces the bay. The streets are paved and regularly laid out, and over the ruined houses on each side beautiful vines and shrubbery are growing luxuriantly, and it seemed to me as if every branch was covered with beautiful, bright-colored birds, which sang the sweetest notes I ever heard. This all made me feel very romantic as I walked about.

There must have once been much wealth here, if one may judge from the remains of some of the houses that show a good deal of splendor. About twelve miles from the city, on one of the highest hills, is a very large and strong castle built by a Count Christophe. He used to bury there every year a large sum of money which he took from the revenues, and then he would shoot the negro whom he made bury it, so that no one would know the secret. . . . The negroes, who are in possession of the island, assume all sorts of titles. There is an emperor, and there are dukes, lords, etc. Some of them are fairly well educated, but they all put on such dignified airs and are so afraid of not being thought equal to white folks that they are very funny.

In January, 1858, Perkins was detached from the *Cyane* and was ordered to the bark *Release*, Commander William G. Parker. She was a

supply ship and was sent first to the Mediterranean. The official journal kept by Perkins in the capacity of acting master is not remarkable either as literature, or history. Still the plain matter-of fact chronicle has a flavor of the sea. The following are extracts:—

January 27, 1858. — Charlestown Navy Yard. U.S. Bark *Release* was put into commission at 1 P.M. Rec'd from the U.S. Ship *Ohio* a draft of 19 men.

January 30. — At 9 A.M. the pilot came on board and at 11, the wind being fair, left the wharf and stood down the harbor under jib and topgallant sails. At 12 the pilot left. At 1 took the departure, Boston light being (per compass) W.N.W.; dist. 7 miles. Unbent chains and secured the anchors for sea. Made and reduced sail as required.

February 1. — During the day, weather very cool, with occasional squalls of hail and snow; crew employed in breaking the ice from the ropes and rails. Passed a school of porpoises going to the E——d.

February 2. — During most of the day a heavy gale from the S——d and E——d. At 4 P.M. reduced sail to a close-reefed main topsail, foretopmast staysail and mizzen staysail and lay to, wind having increased to a very strong gale; the ship laboring very much, and a heavy sea from S——d. At 11 carried away and lost port quarter boat, and at 11.30 carried away the flying jibboom.

February 4. — Heavy gale from N.W. Ship scudding under close-reefed main topsail and foretopmast staysail. Heavy sea and decks flooded with water.

February 5. — Heavy gale from the N.W.; the captain and officers finding the safety of the ship endangered, and having so much cargo on board, considered it necessary to throw the guns overboard, which was done, the decks being knee deep in water and the ship laboring heavily.

February 7. — Ship scudding before the wind with a close-reefed main topsail and foretopmast staysail, a tremendous sea after us. At 3.30 A.M. stove our starboard quarter boat. Forecastle, wardroom, and cabin filled with water, the men not having a dry garment. It is the opinion of some of the officers that we should endeavor to reach the nearest port, and deposit part of our cargo.

February 8. — At daylight the weather moderated, made sail to jib and topgallant sails. Aired bedding, signals, etc.

February 9. — During the first part of the day pleasant weather, latter part squally with rain. Saw several sperm whale during the day. . . . At midnight scudding under a close-reefed main topsail and foretopmast staysail. Decks flooded with water. A very heavy sea running.

February 11. — Threw overboard a lot of condemned beef and pork. Made and reduced sail as required. Decks flooded with water. Obliged to cut holes in the bulwarks to let the water out.

February 14. — At 10 called all hands, read the "Articles of War" and mustered the crew. Decks dry and the weather pleasant.

February 21. — At 1 and 4 A.M. got casts of the land. No bottom at 45 fathoms. At daylight discovered land ahead and on both bows. At 8 A.M. Cape Spartel bore (per compass) S. by E.½E.; Cape

Trafalgar E.N.E. Between 8 and 12 passed through the Straits of Gibraltar. . . . Several sail in sight during the day and the weather pleasant. Decks perfectly dry for the first time since leaving Boston.

February 23. — At 4 threw overboard a bottle containing the ship's reckoning, and with the usual request to whoever shall pick it up to forward the same to Commander, U.S. Navy, U.S. Naval Observatory, Washington, D.C.

March 5. — At daylight discovered land bearing E.N.E. Made all sail and commenced beating up to the mouth of the Bay of Spezia. . . . At 8 came into the port and came to anchor in 8 fathoms of water.

March 6. — At 10 A.M. were boarded by the Pratique officer, and put in quarantine, hoisted the quarantine flag at the fore.

March 9. — Employed during the day discharging cargo. The U.S. Consul visited the ship.

While the *Release* was making a short stay in Spezia, Perkins took the opportunity to visit a few of the most celebrated Italian cities. In writing to the home people he modestly deplores his inability to appreciate as he ought the great art he is in the midst of, and regrets that other members of the family could not be there with him. He further shows his thought of them by drawing on his meager midshipman's salary to purchase for each pretty and tasteful gifts.

It is almost remarkable that repeated absence

for long periods of time had no effect in making George forget his home. Rarely did he send a letter which had not a volley of questions about the various members of the household (including the horses, dogs, and other pets). A growing sense of responsibility frequently appears in the letters of this time. As the oldest son, he knows his words may have some influence; and in an affectionate letter to Roger, the brother nearest him in age, he warns him as he was about to go to Cincinnati against smoking and drinking. He admits that his own record has not been altogether spotless and that Roger may seemingly have some ground for resenting the cautions. Still he maintains that the advice is correct, and adds, "I am a little older and perhaps have seen more of the world and the evil consequences of drinking." And again: "As sure as a young man drinks rum, just so sure will he go to the devil." If this sounds somewhat like a hackneyed temperance address, it should be noted that George Perkins, although young, had already seen several promising young officers ruined by excessive drinking.

With a similar sense of responsibility but in a milder mood he writes to Hammie who was ten

years old: "You must study hard and mind your mother. Write often to me and be a good boy."

It may not be amiss here to make a brief statement in regard to Perkins's attitude towards religion. The family were connected with the Episcopal Church. George frequently attended church, but never made any public profession. He was always reverent; and though it was foreign to his happy effervescing nature "to talk religion," his letters show that occasionally he had times of deep seriousness. Religion for him was invariably associated with tender, unselfish thought for those that were dear to him. There is something thoroughly boyish and lovable in the request made to his mother when the *Release* was about to leave for South America, October, 1858: "Be sure and send me my Bible, for I think I ought to have something from you, and what could be better? — also your *daguerotype* — I do not know how to spell it — and Susy's." Two weeks later it is evident at least part of his request has been honored. He writes, "I received the Bible; it is a very pretty Bible and I am very glad to get it."

On the return of the *Release* from the Mediterranean she was ordered to New York to fit out

and make ready to join the fleet about to be sent to Paraguay. Since 1853 trouble had been brewing with this country. Its previous policy had been to exclude all foreigners. Under President Lopez some Americans had been admitted, but had been subjected to harsh restrictions. In 1855, the *Water Witch*, a United States steamer making a survey of the Parana River for purposes of navigation, was fired upon, and the man at the helm was killed. President Buchanan in 1858 recommended to Congress that the United States should demand redress. In accordance with his plan, Congress sent the Hon. James B. Bowlin as commissioner, backed by a fleet of nineteen armed vessels under Commodore Shubrick. The *Release* was ordered as storeship for the expedition; she was also to ascend the rivers where vessels of heavier draft could not go.

Perkins's letters tell of his experiences during the expedition.

NEW YORK, U.S.S. *Release*,
Nov. 1, 1858.

We are about to haul out into the stream, and very soon all communication with the shore will be broken off and sea life will begin in its reality. If we have good luck, we shall get to Buenos Ayres in forty-five days. *Forty-five days*, just looking at the horizon!

But still, if I receive letters from you when I get to Montevideo and you are well, it will be better to me than seeing the land. But, oh, mother, I cannot help wishing that I could stay at home; indeed, that we could all live always at home. Yet I know we ought to be satisfied; for so far our home is such a good one.

To his sister Susan he sends the following: —

When you write, tell me every little thing — how you passed Thanksgiving especially. It is now the eighth Thanksgiving since I have been at home. How time flies, and we are all growing old fast! I believe that mother and father are now younger than any of us, and it is such a comfort to me to go from home leaving you all so well. Be sure and write me all about Hattie's baby. I should like to keep on writing and writing, for this letter seems a connecting link with you and I hate to break it. I enclose my appointment as acting master; please put it with my other papers.

Instead of the forty-five days reckoned on, it took sixty-three for the *Release* to reach Montevideo. Perkins writes at sea: —

We had no pleasant weather until we were well south. Then it came on calm, and since that time we have made but little progress; indeed, for a week we have almost lain still, and the captain and all hands begin to think the old ship is bewitched. I remained upon deck to-night when the other officers went to the cabin, because it is one of those beautiful evenings at sea from which I cannot take my eyes; but no sooner

was I alone than I began to think of you all. We get on finely together on board this ship, which is lucky, as we have such a long passage. A sailor is singing to a doleful tune something about a fair lass he left behind him. We occasionally see a sail on the horizon, and that is our greatest excitement, but we have not yet spoken any ship.

Later he writes: —

We have passed through the trade-winds and are now in the doldrums, and expect the S.E. trades tomorrow. It is very warm. I have been trying to catch a shark that has been playing about the ship for some time. We catch a good many flying fish and find them very good eating.

The *Release* arrived at Montevideo on January 2, 1859. There followed several days of pleasure-seeking, for as the fleet assembled the city put on an appearance of great animation. The Spanish customs were novel, and Perkins went with the others to see a bull-fight. Three horses and five bulls were killed, but the sport was not exactly to his liking.

Commissioner Bowlin and Commodore Shubrick now proceeded up the rivers to Asuncion in the *Fulton*, accompanied by the *Water Witch*. The other vessels rendezvoused in the Parana near Rosario, where they could quickly

act in case they should be needed. Perkins writes: —

> The difficulty will probably be settled without fighting, though Lopez has a large army and fine forts, and is well prepared to receive us. If we get into a row, it may go rather hard with the *Release* at first, for she is a small vessel and would be sent up the river where the others cannot go. I shall probably be in it, and the prospect pleases me, on the whole, now that I am here.
>
> The lower classes, whom we saw as we came up through the country, seem to be almost in a wild state and the little huts they live in are wretched. But they are all "beggars on horseback" and ride so much that they can hardly walk. Horses are indeed plentiful. In the towns the business is carried on chiefly by English and Germans. There is always a *plaza* in the towns, where the band plays evenings and where the ladies appear dressed in the latest fashions, except that they wear mantillas instead of bonnets. Game is plentiful, and I have fine times hunting, especially the large game of the pampas, which is really exciting. I am anxious to shoot a South American tiger.

Commissioner Bowlin and Commodore Shubrick left Asuncion on February 10, having been there since the 25th of the preceding month, during which they secured all they had sought. Paraguay made ample apologies, paid $10,000 for the family of the American seaman killed on

the *Water Witch*, and concluded satisfactory commercial treaties.

Perkins writes: —

Our fleet is now coming down the river, for our difficulties with the Paraguayan Government are settled. We are taking it leisurely and I am enjoying myself very much. I go hunting and fishing every day. I never saw so much game. The trees are full of all sorts of birds, and fish are equally plentiful in the water. There are also ducks, swans, monkeys, and snakes, as well as everything else that flies or crawls or swims that I ever heard of. And besides there is large game to make it exciting.

The river is high now, and the country is so inundated that I can penetrate far into the forest in a boat. I go every day, but don't get a chance at a tiger. I often think I am on the track of one, but my tigers generally turn out to be river hogs. The latter are curious creatures; the Spanish call them *capinchas*. I don't know what they are like. Their heads look like that of a woodchuck, only a great deal larger, for some of them weigh 400 pounds. The flesh of the young ones is good eating. They live in what resembles a huge nest, half in and half out of the water. The other day I destroyed the peace of one of their families by killing the mother of some young ones. The old father, which had savage-looking tusks, came for me in an awful rage. I ran to the boat for my life, and consider that I was lucky to have escaped him.

All along the river are villages, consisting of clusters of straw huts. In the evening, taking our pilot,

who plays the guitar, I go ashore and have a dance with some of the pretty native girls. There is a dance called the *samaquaker* (I don't know if that is spelled right, but that is the way it sounds), which is a very pretty native dance.

And again shortly afterwards he writes: —

I had an adventure to-day, and almost got my tiger, but missed it just enough to get a good joke on myself. I had gone in a boat up a lagoon to hunt and fish, and coming to a little stream left the boat and giving instructions that the boat should follow me hunted on shore. As I came to a place where a log was thrown across a stream, I went over it. After I had crossed I heard a noise behind me, and looking back I saw a large tiger crossing on the log and apparently on my trail. As I had nothing with me but a shotgun, loaded for birds, it was no use to think of attacking him, and I made the best time I could back to the boat. He did not pursue me, but crawled in the tall grass close by the water's edge where the stream was narrow, and we were obliged to pass him rowing down. I could see by the motion of the tall jungle grass that he was lashing his tail, and as we drew near I could hear him snarl. I can tell you the boat shot by that place like an arrow. I went back to the ship as quick as I could, and taking an officer with me and proper firearms to attack such game, rowed to the place where I had left the tiger. We rowed up cautiously, for I did not want to miss fire, knowing I had an ugly customer to deal with. At last, I could see two bright eyes peering at me through the grass — I was sure that it was he. I took aim and fired — the eyes

disappeared, and there was a short struggle under the grass and bushes. I waited till all was quiet, and then ventured towards the spot very carefully. I was much elated at the thought that finally I had got a tiger, but what I found stretched out at full length was an immense river hog. Well, we had a good laugh about it. But those river hogs had cheated me so often when I had been after a tiger that I was really pretty mad.

A letter written four days later gives a proper conclusion to his hunting adventures: —

At last I have killed my tiger, and in the most unexpected way. I did not have to go beating about the jungle, or look for one at the water's edge at night, or anything like that. To-day, as we were anchored near the bank, three tigers plunged in the river right ahead of the ship. In no time, I got out a boat, and was on the river pulling after them. The current drew them towards us, and one of them turned and made for the boat. His ears were curled back, his jaws were wide open, and the beast which was snarling looked terribly fierce and angry. I was so afraid of not hitting him that I waited before firing till he was close on the boat and the men cried out . . . for they said afterwards that he was so near that if I had missed or he had been only wounded, we should have been done for. But the ball struck him fair, and in an instant he turned over dead. The current swept him off and directly he sank out of sight. At the noise of the report the other tigers swerved aside and went down stream. I was sorry that I had lost him for I wanted his skin; but it is a comfort to think I did

shoot a tiger at last, and as it was in full view of the ship, I shall not lack proof.

A month later (March, 1859), Perkins with several of his classmates was transferred to the frigate *Sabine* and ordered home to take the examinations for promotion to the grade of passed midshipman. Letters from Captain Robb of the *Cyane*, Captain Parker of the *Release*, and Captain Adams of the *Sabine*, all speak of the enviable record Perkins had made on those ships; both in efficiency as a watch officer and acting master, and in conduct — for he had shown not only that he could command others, but that he could keep his own youthful, impulsive self under discipline.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE WEST AFRICAN COAST

EXAMINATIONS for George Perkins, after the maturing influence of sea duty, had lost their old-time formidable character, and he passed those awaiting him on his return from South America without difficulty. He was thus, in April, 1859, promoted to the grade of passed midshipman, and in the September following he was advanced to "master in the line of promotion," a grade corresponding with that of junior lieutenant in the naval organization of to-day.

After his return Perkins had a leave of absence with three months at home. His was an unusually happy home, where with the culture characteristic of the best of New England, there was warmth and affection. It was becoming evident to the judge that there was reason for taking pride in his son; the younger brothers, Roger, Hamilton, and Frank, looked up to him as a hero, and did not lose this pleasant delusion when he joined enthusiastically in their sports; while the mother and the sisters, Harriet and Susan, regarded him ever with exquisite tender-

ness. The sisters had their social circle and made it easy for him to join in the gayety of Concord and vicinity. George always enjoyed society and needed but the slightest introduction to make many friends among the young ladies. He was bright, happy, and warm-hearted — qualities which are sure to make one a favorite.

The grant of absence passed quickly, and all too soon, on August 2, 1859, came the orders, "Proceed to New York without delay and report to Commodore Breese for duty on the U.S. Steamer *Sumter* to perform the duties of acting master." The *Sumter* was to go to the dreaded West African coast to assist in the suppression of the slave trade.

Although the United States had been the nation to found Liberia, the state for freed negroes, the Government had shown gross negligence in enforcing the laws against the slave trade. From 1808, when the importation of slaves became illegal, till 1842, this country did practically nothing to suppress it; for the next seventeen or eighteen years, although American ships of war were sent regularly to the African coast, the perfunctory efforts accomplished but little. On the other hand, Great Britain and other Euro-

pean countries had exhibited considerable vigilance in seizing vessels of their respective nations engaged in the nefarious business.

The decade following 1850 saw a great increase in the slave trade. According to Stephen A. Douglas, more slaves were imported in 1859 than in any year previous, not excluding the time when the traffic was legal; he estimated the number to be not less than 15,000. The increase was because of the unprecedented demand for negro labor. Southerners wanted to develop their large holdings. Slaves had been steadily rising in value, and on account of the high mortality and the greater number of men than women, the death-rate had actually exceeded the birth-rate. The States in the extreme South recognized that slaveocracy was doomed unless they could reverse these conditions; and thus, from 1856 until the Civil War, the more radical Southerners, through commercial conventions and other means, labored for the repeal of the laws making the importation of slaves illegal.

It is therefore not strange that slaves were successfully smuggled into Georgia, Florida, and Texas, and that the Government was apathetic in punishing the few slavers who were caught.

Most of the naval officers ordered to the African coast, well aware of the sentiment in Washington, were not over-zealous in the patrol duty and would send in a prize only when the proofs were scarcely less than absolute. Even in these few cases, the offending captains and their ships were released on bond, and the trials were long postponed. Whenever a man was convicted, the Executive found some reason for not carrying out the sentence. It was not until Lincoln was inaugurated that uncompromising suppression of the slave trade began and that an offender suffered the full penalty — hanging.

Meanwhile, during the fifties, since the United States often embarrassed the American offenders and Great Britain vigorously prosecuted all those flying her flag, the misery attending the slave traffic became intensified. Traders could not afford to wait for a favorable tide or calm, but, when a speck appeared on the horizon suspected to be the sail of a man-of-war, would crowd the negroes into canoes and proceed to loading. When the canoes were caught in the surf, some of the blacks were drowned and others were devoured by sharks. This meant a money loss, but the shipmaster could afford it if he secured a

moderate-sized cargo and succeeded in escaping. That the slaves might be shipped at an hour's notice they were herded together in barracoons at various points on the shore. Smallpox and contagious fevers frequently broke out; whereupon the sick would often be poisoned, drowned, or shot, that the epidemic might be checked. Troubles as bad or worse followed when the negroes were crowded between decks on ships, where death from the exhaustion of fresh water, as well as from epidemics, frequently occurred. To maintain the supply of slaves on the coast, to be traded for and shipped, the fiercer tribes kept up a constant warfare; they made frequent raids, destroying villages and bringing back hundreds of men, women, and children. In exchange for the slaves, they received guns, merchandise of various kinds, and cheap rum. The last demoralized the whole coast, and to the blacks of all kinds was irresistible.[1]

Although President Buchanan's administration, like the preceding ones, was remiss in dealing with this problem, Congress had become aroused by the cruelties and gross violations of

[1] See W. E. B. Du Bois, *Suppression of Slavery*, pp. 173–91; also H. H. Johnston, *Liberia*, vol. 1, pp. 161–76.

law reported, and required that a more vigorous policy be instituted. In 1859, in place of three or four heavy frigates, ill adapted for the service, several small steamers were sent. Among these was the *Sumter*, with George Perkins as acting master.

The following letters were written from New York the last of August, shortly before the ship sailed: —

The captain tells us we are to have a pretty hard cruise; that he has strict orders to confine it to the American cruising ground on the West African coast, and that we cannot stop at Madeira at all.

We have one officer, a lieutenant, who is known throughout the service as "Little Jack Stewart," and who is so funny that he keeps us in roars of laughter whenever he is on board. He will be a great help in keeping up our spirits, for the African coast is said to be trying, and will bring out all our characters.

As I am master I have a great deal to do, and today I have been busy all the time getting in stores. When I have been ashore in New York I have met a good many friends, and no doubt might have had a very gay time, but I have wanted nothing except to go home, or to see some one from home; and now that I can do neither I wish I were at sea, for the quicker I go the quicker I shall come back. We are in three watches, which is harder than I expected. The arrangements for comfort on the *Sumter* are not very complete. The ship is 180 feet long, carries six guns, and can steam ten knots an hour. She is not much on beauty, and rather a mean old tub, take it all round.

George's increased years did not make the affectionate boy as yet immune from an old-time malady, and he writes to his sister Hattie: —

I have been awfully homesick, and I expect my troubles are yet to come, for just as soon as I am left alone, I know I shall be mighty blue. I have the mid-watch to-night, and you can bet that I shall be thinking of you during all my lonely watch.

Two days before sailing (September 2) he writes: —

We have had full dress muster this afternoon and I made my first appearance in epaulettes and cocked hat. I have no doubt I was a glorious sight.

Captain Armstrong is very pleasant and kind to me. As these are the last days before the ship sails, his wife stays on board a good deal, and she feels badly about his going away. She was talking with me this afternoon and said that she could not realize that her husband was going away for so long a while. They have been married eighteen months and this will be the first separation. I often see her in the cabin in tears, and I feel very sorry for her. And this, as I then think, is what it is to be a captain's wife.

The West African coast was considered the least desirable of the American naval stations. The vast stretch of territory patrolled by our ships extended from Liberia to St. Paul de

Loanda, or from about ten degrees north of the equator to ten degrees south. The weather here was hot and wet nearly all the year round. The coast was low, and dangerous to the white man because of muddy creeks and inlets, putrid swamps, and mangrove jungles that surrounded the rivers. Few were the officers who served on this coast without suffering from fever, and rarely did a ship make a prolonged stay without some deaths. This dismal coast had not a single good harbor, and no towns that could be considered as really within the pale of civilization. Consequently a two years' cruise here meant a period of deadly monotony. Yet George Perkins succeeded in surviving all the perils, and with his happy, active disposition found occasional pleasure as well as many an adventure.

His first letter after the ship had arrived on her station was written from Monrovia, Liberia, October 12, 1859: —

> We came here to ship some Kroomen and take in water before proceeding down the coast. Monrovia is merely a collection of negro huts, but it is one of the principal missionary settlements on this coast, and one where slavers are not allowed to trade. A short time ago a vessel came here from New Orleans loaded with negro emigrants. After landing them here she

then proceeded down the coast; there she shipped 500 wild negroes, carried them across the ocean and sold them in the States. . . . The natives look very singular, and I have many a good laugh while observing them.

November 1, 1859.

We are now at Fernando Po, and are here to gain what knowledge we can of its facilities for a coal depot. It is an island close to the coast and belongs to Spain. The Spaniards are trying to establish a colony here, but it is too unhealthy, and the whites will not live long enough to get acclimated. The natives are wild and warlike. They inhabit the mountains, and subsist chiefly on wild fruits. They will not work for love or money.

At present there are several Spanish, French, and English men-of-war here, and a week ago one of the English ships captured an American slaver with 500 negroes on board. The English make a good many captures, as their Government sustains the efforts to put down the slave trade better than ours.

I have suffered a good deal from a tarantula bite on my hand, which swelled so badly that I was alarmed, but it is getting well now. . . . The prospect for our cruise is that it will be very tiresome and have little variety. At our stations there are to be found only a few white people scattered among a lot of negroes. Last Saturday I dined with the Spanish governor of Fernando Po, who has succeeded in living here thirty-three years. He has a black wife and a family of black children. We did not see his wife, but he gave us a fine dinner, and we passed a pleasant day.

We are going from here to the Congo River, and I

have great hopes that we shall capture one or two prizes. That will be some compensation for being on this station.

What a happy time I had at home those last three months! I am constantly recalling it and wishing those days would come back again.

November 29, 1859.

The captain and I took breakfast a few mornings ago with King Té, a celebrated old negro on this part of the coast. The breakfast was served up in great style, for he is rich, having made a great deal of money in the slave-trade. The occasion was thoroughly novel, but I found it difficult to swallow some of the food.

Speaking of one feast reminds me of another. I forgot to tell you about the way we kept Thanksgiving. The commodore fixed it for the fleet on November 24. On that day we were off Lagos, a noted slave-station. It was very hot, and every one of our surroundings was as different from New England as was possible. We had a big dinner, though, and did our best to celebrate.

The king of the Dahomeys, which is a warlike tribe on the coast, supplies most of the slave traders by selling them his prisoners of war. He is very angry that so many vessels should be sent to stop the traffic. During the past year this cruel king has been sacrificing a great many slaves on account of his father's death. He never sacrifices less than five a day, and sometimes he has killed as many as 500 in one day. On hearing of the capture of the *Harris*, loaded with slaves, he was so angry that he had all

the victims he sacrificed on that day dressed in European costume, and then hung them up in all sorts of ways, saying he would let them know how he would treat white slaves. A few days ago an English commodore paid a visit to a tribe in the interior, and the chief entertained him by beheading fifty slaves in honor of his visit.

A few days later George writes one of his younger brothers that the *Sumter* has been cruising about the Bight of Benin without seeing a sail. He knew, however, what would interest the boy: —

When the ship is hove to we make the time pass with a little shark fishing, which I think such a fisherman as you are would enjoy. Yesterday I harpooned a tremendous fellow, and we had a great time getting him on board. There are so many sharks round the ship all the time that we have to be very careful not to fall overboard, for once in the water there would be no help for us.

If we catch a slaver perhaps I shall come home in charge of her; though the officers that have had charge of prizes tell awful stories of the passage to Monrovia with slaves on board. Even when there is no disease among the slaves, the smell that rises from the ship's hold is so horrible that it makes one sick all the time. It is almost impossible to endure it so as to perform duty. One officer, writing from Monrovia, says nothing could tempt him to take charge of another prize, and he was lucky, for the slaves died only at the rate of five a day.

The next letter is dated December 15, when the ship was again at Lagos.

We have just come in here to mail our letters. We hear that the king of Dahomey has finished his yearly sacrifices, and has killed slaves enough to float his canoe in their blood.

We have been out to the Elobey Island where we were sent by the commodore to survey the harbor and make a general report about things there. But there was nothing on or about these islands to make them of any use, either for a coal depot or for any other of our purposes, and we were glad to get away.

Captain Armstrong expects to be ordered to the *San Jacinto*, which is one of the largest side-wheel steamers. He says he has permission from the commodore to take me with him. Our captain stands high in the estimation of the commodore, who is much pleased with his reports and with the condition of this ship. The commodore lets him do as he thinks best in small matters and this makes it pleasant for all.

There were already some cases of fever on shipboard, and all knew that in the unhealthy climate it was dangerous to venture ashore. Nevertheless, it was almost impossible for Perkins not to make occasional visits. He found much to interest him in the Boobes, a tribe that at times came down from the mountains for supplies, whose "principal dress is a hat." In shaking hands with their dusky monarch, he

discovered that the "king's touch" worked him not the traditional benefit, but evil — an eruption on his hands followed. Later he felt he had arrived at a satisfactory explanation when he learned that the tribe were never known to wash.

December 29, 1859.

For the last week we have been on the track of an American slaver, and have thus had a little variety. We have been in company with the English man-of-war *Cedusa*, and as it was Christmas time we exchanged festivities, having dinner parties, excursions on shore, etc. We went to visit the different chiefs, and have palavers about the slave trade. It is a rich sight to see one of these old negro chiefs with his wives and slaves. The chiefs have advanced ideas of how to live and are often very sharp; so that even if a man has nothing to do with the business part of the palaver, he cannot help being interested in the novel phase of human life, and in all the singularities of nature, both animal and vegetable, on a coast like this.

We meet many slavers who carry on the traffic as "palm-oil traders." As there are so many vessels engaged in the slave trade I cannot help hoping we shall make a capture. But under the present system, with our laws such as they are, we cannot do much, and the English make the principal captures. Slaves are being constantly shipped, and the king of Dahomey is now on a slave hunt to supply some ships which he expects from the States. He is a cruel old rascal, and says that if he cannot sell his slaves he

will kill them for a sacrifice, and that they will beg to go in a slaver rather than remain in his hands. We heard terrible accounts of him while we were in the Bight of Benin.

January 18, 1860.

Our cruising ground is now between the equator and St. Paul de Loanda. Captain Armstrong has gone to command the *San Jacinto*, but because of resignations and a short supply of officers, I could not leave this ship to go with him. We now have Captain McDonough.

You ask me, how I look. Well, I am the same size as ever — just the same "little fellow" — and I have given up all hopes of growing taller; but I think I look considerably older, for this climate tells on a man. A great many break down completely when exposed to it. Five officers and several men have already been condemned by medical survey and sent home. All labor connected with the ships that involves going on shore has to be done by negroes hired for the purpose. So deadly is the climate, no white sailor could do it and live.

Fernando Po, February 12, 1860.

Nearly all the squadron are here, and the officers enjoy seeing each other very much. As for me, I feel as if I were having my last good time, for the captain showed me his orders last night and we are to cruise all the year in the wildest and most uncivilized parts of the coast; we are to recruit finally at Elephant's Bay, which is a miserable place, but has the merit of being healthy. We have no hope of Madeira or any other pleasant change.

Lieutenant Stewart is to be married when we go home, and I have just promised him to go to North Carolina and stand up with him. Even now he is writing a long letter to his sweetheart. He is so full of fun I do not know what we should do without him, and we have lived on this ship very pleasantly together.

February 18, 1860.

We are ordered to Kabenda,[1] as news has been received that the negroes are going to rise against the white people there, murder them, burn the factories, and then run for the bush where no white man can follow. So we expect to have a big row.

March 12, 1860.

When we arrived at Kabenda we found the natives at war with the Portuguese, whom they had whipped badly and driven back to St. Paul de Loanda with considerable loss. The chiefs said they had nothing against the Americans and would not touch or interfere with them; so we did not land our forces but stood up for Majumba,[2] in order to meet the mail steamer. When we did so, I received my long-looked-for and much-longed-for letter from home.

Tell Sue that I am afraid she will have to continue manufacturing messages for my lady friends in Concord. As I have not seen a white woman for six months, I fear a message of my own composition would be sadly amiss. However, give my very best love to all and tell them that I have not spent a happy hour since I left Concord.

As I am caterer of the mess, I go on shore a good

[1] Forty miles north of the mouth of the Congo.

[2] About two hundred miles farther north in French Congo.

deal, and have an excellent chance to see all there is of African life. I have become acquainted with the principal chiefs on the cruising ground, and find that the slave-trade is carried on to a great extent.

Within the last two weeks three or four cargoes have been taken from the mouth of the Congo, and I learned from one of the chiefs that there were some slavers up the river. I gave the information to Captain McDonough, and we started up; but although we ascended far enough to find the navigation difficult, the slavers' draft was too light for us. The captain ordered the *Sumter* back, and we returned with only the empty honor of having gone farther up the Congo than any other man-of-war.

On our way down we stopped and ran up a creek to visit a French slave factory. The French make a government affair of the trade, and have several slave barracoons on the coast, from which they ship large numbers. But these slaves, according to French conditions, are liberated after serving seven years, and if they choose can come back to this coast.

The French people were very polite to us, showed us their barracoons and slave ships, and all the slaves that were there ready to be shipped. They amounted to several hundred and were kept in good discipline by a few powerful negroes and a moderate allowance of whipping. We found the barracoons in excellent order, everything clean and well regulated. The slaves went through a series of performances for our entertainment. They danced their native dances, sang native songs, and played some of their native games. It was all peculiar and interesting, and we enjoyed it. Indeed, our stay there was an improvement on anything we have had so far on the coast.

Coming down the Congo, we started for Loango, but, finding we were short of coal, went to St. Paul de Loanda, where we met several of our squadron. Our pleasant trip had rather a melancholy ending, for Captain McDonough is to be superseded in his command on account of the unsatisfactory state of his health.

The captain's poor "health" was a kindly allusion to an extremely unhappy condition. He had been drunk nearly all the time since he had taken command of the ship. Finally, nothing else remained for his officers but to report him. Captain Brent of the *Marion* at once suspended him from duty and ordered Lieutenant Stewart temporarily to take command. Captain McDonough was tried by general court-martial on September 1, 1860, and ordered home. Those officers who had a weakness for liquor found the African coast with its monotony and isolation a dangerous station. They also were least able to withstand the deadly tropical fevers.

April 15, 1860.

The clipper ship *Nightingale* shipped a cargo of 2000 negroes and has gone clear with them. If she gets them to Havana, they will bring, on an average, $600 apiece; so you can calculate how much money will be made on her. The *Nightingale* is a powerful clipper, and is the property of her captain, Bowen,

who is called the Prince of Slavers. The first time I was up the Congo, the *Sumter* went up fifteen miles after a slaver under his command, called the *Sultana*. We found the bark *Sultana* and the brig *Kibby* with their slave decks all laid and everything ready for the cargo. We examined both ships and detained one for three days; then our captain let her go, declaring against every proof that there was nothing in the ship but what was in her manifest. Of course these ships at once filled up with slaves and calmly sailed off — there was no escape about it. With the money Bowen made from the sale of those slaves he has purchased the *Nightingale*, one of the fastest clippers known. When I saw Bowen in command of the *Sultana* he was living very luxuriously; everything in his cabin had elegance, and everything about his career was as nearly as possible like that of the romantic pirates and slave captains who are introduced into novels. Our vessels cruise very little now after slavers. The captains think it useless under existing laws.

Miss Perkins relates that in 1864 in New Orleans her brother chanced again to meet the captain of the *Kibby*, and learned of the later history of Bowen. Some time after the *Nightingale* had eluded the *Sumter* she ran into another war vessel and was captured. However, Bowen made his escape, soon had another ship, and resumed his old trade. Later he was taken by the English, and again made his escape. As there was no longer a profitable market for slaves, he

turned his attention to the hotel business in Aspinwall, and was flourishing there according to the latest report.

April 15, 1860.

It is Sunday evening, and everything is quiet on board ship, for poor Captain Rooney is very sick, and there is but little hope of his recovery. We all pity him, but I do not think he cares to live, for he has had a great deal of trouble. The other day he received a letter from the woman who once was his wife, but who had deserted him. It was a letter written some time ago that had been following him all about. He was terribly excited by receiving it and since then has grown rapidly worse.

Even little Jack Stewart is quiet and downhearted, not only on account of poor Rooney, but because his sweetheart has stopped writing him. He says this is the ninth time his faithful heart has been shattered by Cupid's arrows.

April 16, 1860.

I cannot write or do much of anything to-day, for I was up all night with the captain, and I am very tired. He has my room, as it is the coolest on board ship. I can hear him now talking and muttering in a feverish way, and every little while he breaks out and raves in a wild delirium. It is dreadful. The doctor says that if there is no change for the better very soon, he cannot possibly live. I wish he could get better, for sickness and death on board ship are very sad.

April 20, 1860.

Everything is very quiet on board ship this evening. The officers say little and the boys speak in

whispers round the ward table, as though they were afraid of waking the dead. For poor Rooney is dead. The officers were standing round his bed a few hours ago when he expired. His disease was delirium tremens. It was indeed sad that he did not awake to consciousness and leave some parting request for his family and friends, and prepare himself in a measure to stand before his Maker. The weather adds to our gloominess; the night is awful, the rain comes in torrents with sharp lightning and long rolling thunder. It seems doubly to warn us of the presence of the Supreme Being.

KABENDA, April 26, 1860.

We brought Captain Rooney's remains here and buried him with military and Masonic honors. We had his grave dug under a large tree on shore. The spot is pleasant, but the surroundings are wild and the inhabitants on this part of the coast are almost in a savage state. They say, however, "We like the Americans, and we will not touch the dead man."

May 13, 1860.

The doctor and I have been on an excursion into the interior to a place five miles from Point Pedras.[1] The natives there are savage and treacherous so that no white person can stay there. But with us ignorance was bliss. Knowing nothing about them, we started on our trip without arms but with five bottles of gin and two Kroomen to carry them. We went to a large village, and soon after our arrival saw how matters were. So uncivil were the people that we really feared for our lives. However, we managed to get the

[1] A few miles northwest of Majumba in French Congo.

old king drunk, when he said he was our friend. The natives did not dare to act without his orders, so that we reached the brush without much trouble and returned to the ship all right.

May 27, 1860.

We are now anchored off shore between Point Pedras and Majumba. At four o'clock to-morrow morning we shall get under way. When we arrive we shall fire a gun, which is the prevailing signal on this coast for notifying the natives that one wishes to trade. A few hours after this signal the coast will be lined with negroes loaded with all their produce, which consists of goats, chickens, eggs, pigs, etc., with a few mats and baskets. After the beach is well covered with natives, we have our boat manned by the Kroomen. These are huge black fellows that ship on this station for boat duty and the work ashore, which our men cannot perform in this climate. They come from the Kroo country in Upper Guinea, just south of Liberia. When they ship, the officers usually christen them by some queer name — the more ridiculous the better — and the Krooman answers to this all through the service. A special favorite of mine is called "Upside Down"; then there is another named "Frying Pan"; and a particularly big and black one is named after a delicate Annapolis belle. They seem to be almost amphibious, and it is astonishing to see them in the water.

At this season of the year the surf runs high and it is dangerous to land; at any rate we rarely escape a ducking. The further story of our trading will show how it happens.

When the boat is ready and manned by the Kroo-

men, all the old bottles, old cans, ship knives, cotton handkerchiefs, old clothes, and several bottles of liquor are passed into it, and then such officers as wish to go take their places. Most of the officers, though, after a few trips to satisfy their curiosity give up going as they do not like the surf. Your affectionate brother, however, always goes; anything for variety, and there is a good deal of excitement about this.

The Kroomen strike up a song to pull by and row four or five miles to the edge of the surf. Then they lie on their oars, and all eyes turn leeward looking for a big roller to carry them on shore. These moments of watching are exciting and you hold your breath in spite of yourself. The roller looks like a great live monster, and you do not feel at all sure how he will treat you. At length when the looked-for wave comes, the Kroomen give way with a shout, the natives on shore yell with all their might, the boat shoots forward on the top of the breaker at the rate of twenty knots an hour, while the surf thunders like the roar of a battery. Altogether it seems as if the world had come to an end, and all the fellows in the infernal regions were let loose.

Now you must trust to luck. There is no retreat, and go on shore you must, either in the boat or under it. After the few wild moments of rapid transit, the boat strikes the beach, the Kroomen jump overboard, if they are not there already, and you jump on the back of one. He runs up the beach with you out of the way of the next roller, which immediately follows the one that brought you in, and which breaks over the boat, often upsetting it, and always wetting everything inside. When the Krooman lands you from his back

high up on the dry beach, if you have escaped a good thorough soaking, and are not half drowned, you are fortunate.

Three weeks later Perkins had a thrilling experience which furnishes abundant proof of the danger connected with landing. He relates his adventure in a letter dated June 17, 1860:—

A short time ago, when the ship was off the Settee River,[1] I thought it would be a good idea to try and discover the river's mouth. So I volunteered to take a boat's crew and attempt it; I had no idea of trying to land, for that I knew would be foolhardy.

We pulled in, till about half a mile from shore, and then rowed along the coast. But while we were examining the shore for the river's outlet, a roller which had started far out at sea caught our boat and capsized it. Of course we were obliged to swim for shore, though, in truth, we had little to do with it, for the moment the boat was upset we were driven in the surf. Not one of us thought we should ever reach the shore; for if we were not drowned we would be eaten up by the sharks. As I rose on the top of a wave, I looked ahead and saw nothing but a great stretch of wild-tossing surf. It seemed perfectly impossible for anyone to live in it. But when I looked back I saw all my men striking out for the shore, and this was very encouraging, for I was afraid one or two might be under the boat. I thought for a moment of you all at home, and wondered if mother would not feel a little frightened if she knew where her oldest son was

[1] Near Grand Bassa

at that moment; and it occurred to me how small were the chances that I should ever receive my next letter from you — our ship was then on its way for the mail. Then a roller struck me and carried me down so deep that I was caught by the undertow and kept down a long time, all the while being carried towards the sea. When I came up again I tried to look out for the next roller, but it was of no use; the one that followed half drowned me, and the next kept me down so long that when I rose I was still right in the worst of the surf trembling and tossing all about me. My eyes, nose, and mouth were full of sand, and I certainly thought my time had come.

Just then I looked towards shore and saw two of my men dragging another from the water. At that I struck out again and my last despairing kick brought me where two of the men took hold of me. That was all I knew of the affair. My next sensation was of being well shaken; then my consciousness gradually returned, and I heard one of the men say, "Cheer up, Mr. Perkins, your boat and all the men are on shore." This was such good news that I did not mind the uncomfortable position in which I found myself. I was covered with sand and stretched across a log about two feet high, my head on one side and my feet on the other, while the men were doing all they could to bring me to.

June 24, 1860.

While writing this letter a week ago, I was taken sick with the African fever, and this is the first time I have attempted to sit up. But everything looks so pleasant this morning I thought I would try to write you a few lines. The doctor says I am still weak and

We made a sort of tent and built a fortification, traded almost all our clothes for something to eat, and slept unpleasantly near 500 howling savages. It was a hard, disagreeable time, and all the while the ship was in sight but could render us no assistance. We learned afterwards that they floated off casks of provisions in hopes the tide would bring them in, but they never reached us. In time, though, some Kroomen got on shore from the ship and brought us some oars. After trying all one day, we succeeded, just at night, in pulling through the surf and getting back to the ship.

It was a happy evening for us, and it seemed so for all hands, for everyone on board had been very anxious about us. The Kroomen were sure we should all be drowned. Not far north of this place, if a sailor happens to get cast ashore, the natives kill and eat him at once. Cannibalism is by no means extinct among many of the negro tribes. The men that were with me have all been down with the fever, and I am the last case. The doctor has just come and says I must go to bed. So good-night.

In the experiences on this dismal coast, the thought of home for Perkins seems never to have lost its power to relieve the monotony and give brightness and cheer — the best evidence possible as to the character of the home as well as of the home-loving young officer. Not infrequently his thought is for the younger brothers, as may be seen from the following: —

Tell Frank I will bring him all the coins I can pick up. The negroes use shells, called cowries, for money, and have of course no coinage.

And later as he tells of his pets: —

I trade in birds a good deal and keep a collection on board ship in my room and about the rigging. I have some splendid parrots; some of them know so much that it almost scares me; it seems as if they must be human. There is one I mean to keep and bring home if I can; I call him "Bosen," for he is the only one that can exactly imitate the boatswain's whistle. I have two little "love-birds," and they are the most cunning birds there ever were. I have a "widow-bird," too, and I wish you could see the beautiful plumage for which this bird is noted. I find, to my sorrow, that many of the birds I get here will not live long on board ship, and I think I shall have to give up birds and take to monkeys.

I have a beautiful little blue-nosed monkey who is very intelligent, but is always in mischief. He has a special spite against little Jack Stewart and takes every opportunity to plague him. No sooner does poor Stewart seat himself under the skylight for a good, comfortable read than this little scamp watches his chance, and then with one spring lights exactly on the bald spot in the middle of Stewart's head. Poor Stewart jumps up in an awful rage, swearing he will "kill that monkey," who, by this time, is sitting in the rigging out of his reach and chattering and laughing at him.

Near the end of June, while Perkins was still suffering from fever, he sent by the *Marion*,

which was leaving for home, presents varied in kind. There were ninety pounds of coffee, a bundle of mats, two sets of African baskets, one saw-fish, and three idols, together with a box for his sister Susan, ordered from Madeira.

Miss Susan was four years the younger, but between the two a strong comradeship as well as the tenderest affection ever existed. Thus, in writing to his mother, at this time, Perkins says: —

> I received a letter from Sue by the last mail. She posted me up very well about home. Sue is my main stay. I do not know what I should do if she were not at home.

Of the box sent from Africa to his sister, fortunately Miss Susan herself has written a description: —

> This consisted of lovely specimens of the delicate and beautiful Madeira work and embroidery, much rarer then than now. Besides boxes of fine mosaic, chains of hair-work, feather flowers, a shawl knit by hand of the finest thread, and yards of hand-made trimming. I shall never forget how delighted I was to receive this box, and what a wonderful brother George seemed to me.

There was still a year more of duty for him on the African coast, and his shipwreck in the

Settee River by no means ended his adventures. It was impossible for one of Perkins's temperament to avoid them.

August 27, 1860.

Since I wrote you last I have visited two of the wildest places. The first was on the Bonney River; this, after I had crossed one of the most dangerous bars on the coast, I ascended twenty-five miles in an open boat. I went to carry the mails to the English mail steamer, and once at the station I had to remain three days on account of the high surf, and at last had to come out on the English steamer. One of the palm-oil traders gave a big supper in honor of my arrival up the river, and said I was the first American naval officer that had ever been in Bonney. The officers of the mail steamer told me that they had never heard of such a boat as mine crossing the bar, and that it was a great wonder I had arrived safely. The natives on the Bonney River are cannibals, and if I had been upset they would have killed and eaten me.

The shark is a fetish among the negroes on this river, who feed them till they grow large and fierce. Every year they sacrifice an innocent child, brought up expressly for this purpose. This child is generally ten years old, and must be healthy and perfect in every respect. The slightest scratch will make her unfit for the sacrifice. On the appointed day the child is placed on some planks across a canoe and taken out on the river. They do not let her know her horrible fate, but all at once they tip the plank, and the moment she touches the water she is seized and devoured by a monster that is hovering about.

As I had been gone so long, all on board ship

thought I was lost, and they gave me a warm welcome when I came back safe and sound.

Directly after my return we started south and anchored in Camma Bay, up the Fernan Vas River.[1] Captain Laurens, an American merchant there, sent for some of our officers to come on shore and have a palaver with the natives. So Stewart and several others including myself accepted the invitation, and found when we went ashore that a large number of natives with their chiefs had collected to receive us. As Captain Laurens was anxious to impress them with the dignity of the officers of his Government, I persuaded Stewart to go in full uniform, cocked hat, and all. The rest of us following attended him with the utmost ceremony, and gave the natives to understand his person was sacred. He made them a fine-sounding address, which was interpreted to them. In this he set forth the power and glory of the United States, and then said that his country was willing and even desirous to be on good terms with such famous chiefs, and would protect them if they never would harm the Americans, especially Captain Laurens.

They made a suitable reply, and the palaver being done, they set themselves to preparing a feast. They first slaughtered an ox, which was to be cooked and eaten whole, and then began to prepare other equally delicate dishes. Some of the savages had never seen a white man before, and they would slink up to us, touch our white skins, look at us for a moment with their fierce, wild eyes, and then run away. Night was now coming on, and darkness descends so quickly in this latitude that I began to be anxious. So I col-

[1] In French Congo, about two degrees south of the Equator.

lected my party and hurried them off. I tied in the boat some wild dogs and a red-headed monkey, which I had bought, and then we got in and shoved off. In spite of all our efforts, the boat capsized just as it rose on the last wave of the surf, and we had to swim. At length, however, the boat was righted, and all having been picked up we reached the ship in safety. Later, I nearly died with laughing as I thought of our adventure, and so would you if you could have seen it. Of course, the moment the boat upset I struck out for the shore. As soon as I was able to look back and see where the rest were, I caught a glimpse of poor little Stewart, who had wholly abandoned himself to the rollers. He was bobbing up and down between the wild dogs and the monkey. First, his cocked hat would rise on a wave, and then his little boots would come uppermost, or *vice versa*. All in the vicinity were sputtering, howling, and yelling, and unable to do anything else. But we soon rescued them, and now we are all safe on shipboard.

The ducking did not seem to agree with the animals as well as with the human beings, for my wild dogs died, and as my monkey was beginning to droop I sent him ashore. So this time Hammie and Frank have lost their present.

The months during the latter part of 1860 and early part of 1861 were not without their small occurrences, but the incidents seem to be largely a repetition of previous ones, and the routine duties considerably increased. Perkins writes: —

I keep pretty busy every day, and manage to fill in almost every moment. I have a regular watch, four hours in the day and four hours in the night, and besides my duties as master and navigator, I am caterer of the mess.

Supplies were expensive on the African coast and it required some care to keep the mess bill down to thirty dollars a month, which it commonly was for the officers. In his capacity both as navigator and caterer of the mess, Perkins amused himself just before leaving the African coast by making some calculations, and discovered: —

Since we left New York [twenty-one months previous] we have run over 50,000 miles, and five of us have eaten 3000 chickens.

A short visit made by the *Sumter* to St. Helena in the spring of 1861 brought a change and gave an opportunity to wander over the island with its high plateau where the exiled Napoleon had walked and talked and dreamed.

The absorbing interest for the *Sumter*, however, was the trouble that was threatening the nation at home — secession and the prospect of war. Perkins writes from Skark's Point, Congo River, on March 27, 1861: —

We do not know what to think about the dreadful news from home. We take the New York *Herald*, but it reaches us very irregularly now, and we do not know what to believe. I cannot think our grand republic is going to pieces. Three of the Southern officers in our squadron have resigned and the others from the South threaten to do the same.

On May 1 he similarly writes:—

The news which the last mail brings us confirms, without hope of contradiction, the fact there exists a dreadful rebellion in our beloved country. It has thrown the squadron into a state of great excitement. For some time past the foreigners on this coast have treated us with very little respect and it has been plain that they thought us a broken power. I can tell you this has been very annoying to loyal officers. . . . Is there financial trouble at home? We cannot get any money out here, and we suppose the department at Washington must be in great confusion. The news about our country is so absorbing that we can think and talk of nothing else. . . . I do not say much, but I feel and know that if I had the power I would act, and I think the North has been patient long enough. . . . The Union must be saved.

The officers on the foreign stations knew that the *Sumter* and nearly all the other ships must soon be recalled to take their part in the war. But though the Home Squadron was utterly inadequate to render the service required of it on the outbreak of hostilities, it was months

before it had received the additional strength that was available from the ships on the foreign stations. The reason was twofold. During the latter part of Buchanan's administration and even in the first weeks of Lincoln's, the department feared to issue the orders necessary to recall the different squadrons lest the South should regard it as a hostile act and at once begin the conflict. When the orders finally were sent, considerably more time elapsed before they were received and the ships could return.

While the officers and men of the *Sumter* were waiting with feverish anxiety for news from Washington, there came the climax of the two years' cruise. Under date of June 14, 1861, Perkins writes with great satisfaction that they have at last captured a slaver, the brig *Falmouth*. Perkins had the promise of bringing her home, but Captain Armstrong, who again had become the commanding officer of the *Sumter*, was greatly attached to him. He desired Perkins to remain and act as first lieutenant to the end of the cruise. Of this Perkins writes to his home people: —

> Don't you think I have a right to feel highly flattered to be acting first lieutenant at my age? This

offer and the persuasions of the captain have induced me to give up my right to come home, though I hate to see the brig sail off and not go in her. It is some consolation, though, to have taken a slaver at all; for we never expected to get such a chance after we found how the laws worked.

Finally in the summer of 1861 the orders, directing the *Sumter* to sail for home, arrived. The preparations for the voyage devolved chiefly on the first lieutenant, and Perkins appreciated the fact that expedition at this critical time was essential. He got to the coaling station even before the flagship, and having secured the necessary supplies started for home. It will be recalled that at the beginning of the cruise he had characterized the ship as "*not very fast*" and "rather a mean old tub." Two years of constant service with no chance of overhauling could hardly have improved her sailing qualities. However, Perkins [illegible] Captain Armstrong's [illegible] Preparations having been made, he tested the ship's speed to the utmost; and favored by the weather he had what the newspapers of the day spoke of as the [illegible] between Africa and the Azores Islands.

The two years on the African coast had [illegible]

full of danger, and few officers if any could pass through the experience without having their lives perceptibly shortened. Yet the experience had not been without distinct benefit to Perkins. He had developed a taste for reading, and had not only associated respectfully with Addison and Sterne, but had been on familiar terms with Trollope. Busied by his letter-writing, shark-fishing, hunting, caring for pets, visiting native chiefs, together with more than an ordinary share of routine work, he seems to have had no difficulty in avoiding the vices incident to monotonous duty on a lonely station. The experience had revealed the strength of the man, and had brought with it a deepening of fine feeling and an awakening of responsibility. He might have developed this strength elsewhere, but a man who delights in society and is sought after as was Perkins commonly needs something of solitude to find himself. On February 2, 1861, he was commissioned lieutenant, and this date may be taken as marking his entrance upon full manhood.

CHAPTER V

THE CAPTURE OF NEW ORLEANS

ON being detached from the *Sumter*, in the middle of September, Perkins was given one month's leave. After the hard and wearing cruise he could appreciate, as never before, rest and a little social gayety; and there was no other place that had such attraction for him as home. Stirred, however, by the dangers threatening the nation, he soon became impatient for active service, and it was with alacrity that he responded to the department's letter ordering him to New York as first lieutenant of the gunboat *Cayuga*.

His new ship was a screw steamer of 507 tons, carrying six guns. "Not very well fitted up for comfort," he writes, "though she is a fine gunboat." Of the officers, none besides the captain and himself had had any previous experience in the navy, and of the crew, all but four or five were green hands. There were many busy days for the lieutenant, getting the ship in readiness before sailing on February 28.

It soon became evident that Perkins was fort-

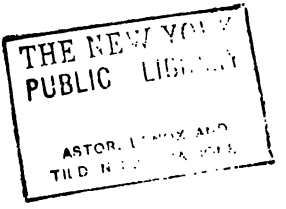
unate in having duty on the *Cayuga*, for she ha orders to join the West Gulf Blockading Squad ron under Farragut. She reached her statio when the active operations against New Orlean were about to begin. The brilliant exploit i running past its defenses, Forts Jackson and S Philip, and speedily compelling their surrende together with that of the city, ranks in the nav events of the Civil War only second to the figh between the *Monitor* and *Merrimac*. In thi exploit, the *Cayuga* was destined to take a lea ing part.

The following letters, written by Perkins t the home people, tell of the progress of events:–

KEY WEST, March 12, 1862.

We arrived here yesterday after a very hard pas age from New York. The first night we left we had gale from the northwest, and it was very cold. Th men knew little about a man-of-war, and it was ha for them; there was really great suffering among from freezing. Two of our yards were carried awa Another gale followed this, and there was just series of them, more or less severe, all the way her The engines were so strained that we broke dow twice, and we were on our last legs when we got i If I do my very best, I cannot get this ship in ord possibly before next week, though the commodo [Farragut] is in a great hurry to get us off and mal the attack on New Orleans.

UNITED STATES GUNBOAT, CAYUGA


THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

SHIP ISLAND, March 31, 1862.

General Butler is embarking his troops, and we all leave this evening for New Orleans. Everywhere is excitement. The attack will be made at once, and they say if it is successful it will end the war.

I always told you everything would be settled as soon as I went into action, and now I expect it will. It seems very strange to be down here surrounded by Rebels. This morning one of our gunboats had a skirmish with one of theirs within plain sight of our fleet.

The *Cayuga* while coming here from Key West took a prize, which we have sent back to New York.

Everyone is writing home. I expect my next letter, if I write at all, will be dated from New Orleans.

OFF ATCHAFALAYA, LOUISIANA,
April 4, 1862.

Since I wrote you last we have had an exciting time. The next day after leaving Ship Island, we arrived at the mouth of the Mississippi. There we met the commodore and the rest of the fleet. A number of his vessels had bad luck and got ashore. The commodore felt sure of being able to take New Orleans, and was getting ready for the attack; but a good many of the longest-headed officers thought it would be doubtful about his success. The forts are well garrisoned, and they have a fleet of gunboats and some ironclads. Beauregard is there and the city is under martial law. Because so many of our vessels are on shore, the commodore has been obliged to delay the attack, and has ordered the *Cayuga* off this place to blockade.

This morning a gunboat, two steamers loaded

with troops and guns, and a schooner with one gun sailed over the reef and came towards us. We cleared ship for action, and, when they arrived in full sight, hoisted our colors. They hoisted theirs and stood for us, and we expected a hard fight, but before they arrived within range we thought we would fire our guns off, as they had been loaded several days, and then load them fresh for the expected fight. So we took aim, blazed away, and started for our enemies. But as soon as we did this, they fired a couple of shots at us, and turned tail and ran. We chased them into shallow water but had to give them up, for the *Cayuga* draws ten feet and had nearly grounded. . . .

We return to-morrow afternoon to the Mississippi to get ready for the fight at New Orleans. It must certainly come off next week. If the commodore had not been unlucky about the ships — several getting aground — it would have been all over by this time. . . .

We spoke the *Connecticut* just outside, and I received letters from you, letters which I have read over many times.

In spite of there being so much going on as to keep up a constant excitement, and my being so busy, I am always thinking of you at home. Give my love to Aunt Anne and tell her I opened her pickles to-day and found them a great treat.

U.S.S. *Cayuga*,
STORMING THE FORTS UP THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER,
April 20, 1862.

The bombardment of the forts commenced three days ago; during the first day we were in close action,

but we all came out safe. The enemy's cannon balls drop about us constantly. Several of the vessels in the fleet have been struck and a few men killed and wounded. To-day or to-morrow we start up the river. The chain across it was cut last night, and I have no doubt but that the forts will be ours before to-morrow evening.

I have but a moment to write. The Rebels are continually sending down fire-rafts, and the bombardment from the mortars goes on night and day, so that we have hardly any sleep. I will write as soon as we reach New Orleans, and I hope you are not worrying, for by the time you get this everything will be over.

Unless we meet some unforseen obstacle, New Orleans must fall, though perhaps it will take a week's hard fighting. We have just heard that Captain Bailey has taken the *Cayuga* for his flagship, and consequently we shall lead the gunboats.

The passing of the forts below New Orleans by Farragut's fleet was accomplished on April 24, 1862, which was nearly a month after most of his ships had arrived off the entrance to the Mississippi. There was found considerable difficulty in getting the largest ships, particularly the *Mississippi* and the *Pensacola*, over the bars at the mouth of the river. They had to be pulled through the mud, and the work required two weeks. The huge *Colorado* had to be left outside. She was the command of Captain

Theodorus Bailey, next to Farragut in rank. And that is why, on running past the forts, the former officer transferred his flag to the little *Cayuga* and led the column of Union ships in the gunboat on which Perkins was the first lieutenant. When Farragut had crossed the bars, and had assembled seventeen of his fleet in the river above, he recognized the importance of an attack at the earliest possible moment. The enemy had the greatest confidence in the strength of their position. It was the common opinion that any attack on New Orleans must be from the north, made by a slow and laborious progress down the Mississippi from Cairo. In consequence the Confederate War Department had not concerned itself with the necessity of giving New Orleans additional protection against the threatening movement in the Gulf, of which persistent rumors were received. Notwithstanding this blindness, Farragut had need of most careful planning.

Barring the passage of the seventeen ships were Forts Jackson and St. Philip, mounting seventy-five and fifty-three guns respectively, and garrisoned each by 700 men.[1] Also there

[1] D. D. Porter, *The Naval History of the Civil War*, p. 177.

was a fleet of eighteen vessels, including the ironclad rams *Manassas* and *Louisiana*. Most of these later proved but frail crafts, but they had not been so reported to Farragut; and after the exploits in Hampton Roads of the dread and invulnerable *Merrimac*, any one less than Farragut with a fleet of wooden ships might indeed have hesitated. Captain Preedy, of the British Navy, and a French admiral, whose name is not recorded, happened to come down the river, after having just visited the forts, and they freely expressed the opinion that the Union ships would never succeed in fighting their way past. Besides all this the defenses of New Orleans might in a few days be considerably strengthened if the Confederate Government should take alarm and hurry men and supplies to the scene. Farragut appreciated this so thoroughly that he was willing to accept grave risks rather than make further long delays.

On the 16th of April the Union attack began with a furious bombardment by Porter's mortar boats. For six days and six nights this continued, and about 2800 shells were fired every twenty-four hours. After two or three days of the bombardment, Farragut, convinced that the

Confederate defenses could not be reduced by this means, determined to stake his all on a single desperate move and run past the forts. As Farragut was well aware, if he were driven back, he could hardly expect to escape without the loss of several ships. Or if only a few ships passed above the forts, the strong Confederate defenses to the rear would effectively cut them off from their base of supplies, thus placing them in a weak military position and making any protracted campaign impossible. On the other hand, if he should succeed in taking most of the ships above the forts, he could capture New Orleans, cut off the supplies to the forts, and move against them from above as well as from below, with the coöperation of 18,000 troops under General Butler accompanying the expedition.

Early on the morning of April 24 the fleet made the attempt. At two o'clock two red lights displayed from Farragut's ship, the *Hartford*, gave the signal to weigh anchors, take prescribed places, and advance. Almost instantly the clanking of anchor chains and the suppressed bustle throughout the fleet showed that the final movement against New Orleans had begun.

The first ship to pass through the chain barrier and to steam under the guns of Forts Jackson and St. Philip was the *Cayuga*. Standing in an exposed position on the forecastle of the *Cayuga*, indifferent to the storm of shot and shrapnel from the forts and giving rapid orders in his sharp, incisive manner was George Perkins. He had been directed to act as pilot, and virtually was in command of the ship.

The Union fleet was moving in one long column, made up of three divisions. Farragut's division was the center, and was composed of the three strongest ships, sloops of war, with the *Hartford*, as the flagship. This was preceded by the First Division, comprising four gunboats, one side-wheeler, and three sloops of war, under Captain Bailey. The *Cayuga*, which he had chosen for his flagship, was much smaller and more lightly armed than either the *Pensacola* or *Mississippi*, which followed next.

Twenty-five minutes after the *Cayuga* had begun the attack, the *Hartford*, leading the Second Division, was opening with her bow guns on Fort Jackson. The darkness and smoke rendered it impossible for the gunners in the forts to secure an accurate aim, but also made it

difficult for the Union ships to keep their course or to distinguish friend from foe. Suddenly out of the gloom and confusion, Farragut saw a fire-raft coming directly for his ship. To avoid the raft he put his helm over, whereupon the *Hartford* grounded on a shoal near Fort St. Philip. Under the heavy fire of the shore batteries, she was in a trying position, and still worse, the *Mosher*, a Confederate tugboat until then unnoticed, was pushing a fire-raft down upon her. In an instant the port quarter of the *Hartford* was a mass of flames, which were licking the paint and rising halfway to the top. It was a moment full of destiny, but Farragut was equal to the crisis. Although as he remarked afterwards he "seemed to be breathing flames," with a calm self-possession he reassured his men, and each with alacrity did his part in carrying out the orders. The ship's guns drove off the tug, and kept playing on the forts; the well-organized fire company put out the flames; the engines backed the ship off the shoal; and again she headed up the river.

The *Brooklyn* and the *Mississippi*, while running past the forts, had successively a sharp engagement with the Confederate ironclad ram

Manassas, the *Mississippi* not leaving her foe until the ram had run ashore and her crew had escaped to the swamp. The executive officer of the *Mississippi* happened to be Perkins's friend of Academy days, Lieutenant George Dewey, the future admiral. The *Varuna* was the only one of Farragut's ships lost in the battle; after safely passing the forts she encountered the Confederate gunboats, and being considerably in advance of most of the fleet she was rammed by the *Gov. Moore*, and obliged to run ashore to prevent sinking. Three of Farragut's vessels bringing up the rear of the column were not able to stand the fire of the forts and turned back. Each of the thirteen that succeeded in passing had its adventures, but none were more thrilling than those of the *Cayuga*, and fortunately we have a simple, unstudied account of them in a letter that Perkins wrote home after the battle.

NEW ORLEANS, April 27, 1862.

We arrived here two days ago, and after what was "the most desperate fight and greatest naval achievement on record," so every one says. Wednesday night, April 23, we were ordered to lead the way, and be ready to run by the forts at two o'clock in the morning; and at two o'clock precisely the signal was made from the *Hartford* to "get under way."

Captain Harrison paid me the compliment of letting me pilot the vessel. It was a starlight night, but we were not discovered until we were well under the forts; then they opened a tremendous fire on us. I was very anxious, for the steering of the vessel being under my charge gave me really the whole management of her. The *Cayuga* received the first fire, and the air was filled with shells and explosions, which almost blinded me as I stood on the forecastle trying to see my way, for I had never been up the river before. As I soon saw that the guns of the forts were all aimed for the midstream, I steered close under the walls of Fort St. Philip, and although our masts and rigging got badly shot through, our hull was but little damaged.

After passing the last battery and thinking we were clear, I looked back for some of our vessels, and my heart jumped into my mouth when I found I could not see a single one. I thought they all must have been sunk by the forts. Then looking ahead I saw eleven of the enemy's gunboats coming down upon us, and it seemed as if we were "gone" sure. Three of these made a dash to board us, but a heavy charge from our 11-inch gun settled the *Gov. Moore*, which was one of them. A ram, the *Manassas*, in attempting to butt us, just missed our stern, and we soon settled the third fellow's "hash." Just then some of our gunboats, which had passed the forts, came up, and then all sorts of things happened. There was the wildest excitement all round. The *Varuna* fired a broadside into us, instead of the enemy. Another of our gunboats attacked one of the *Cayuga's* prizes, — I shouted out, "Don't fire into that ship, she has surrendered!" Three of the enemy's ships had sur-

rendered to us before any of our vessels appeared, but when they did come up we all pitched in, and settled the eleven Rebel vessels, in about twenty minutes. Our short fight with the *Gov. Moore* — it used to be the *Morgan* — was very exciting. We were alongside of each other, and had both fired our guns, and it all depended on which should get reloaded first. The large forward gun on the *Gov. Moore* was a 10-inch shell, ours an 11-inch, and we were so near they were almost muzzle to muzzle.

Ours was fired first, and Beverly Kennon, the captain of the *Gov. Moore*, is now a prisoner on board the *Cayuga*. He tells me our shot was the one that ruined him, — disabled his vessel, capsized his gun, and killed thirteen of the gun's crew. Beverly Kennon used to be an officer in our navy.

The *Cayuga* still led the way up the river, and at daylight we discovered a regiment of infantry encamped on shore. As we were very close in, I shouted to them to come on board and deliver up their arms, or we would blow them all to pieces. It seemed rather odd for a regiment on shore to be surrendering to a ship. They hauled down their colors, and the colonel and command came on board and gave themselves up as prisoners of war. The regiment was called the Chalmette regiment, and has been a rather famous one. The officers we released on parole and allowed them to retain their side-arms, all except one captain, who I discovered was from New Hampshire. His name is Hickery, and he came from Portsmouth. I took his sword away from him and have kept it.

The next thing that happened was the sinking of the *Varuna*, which had been disabled by one of the

enemy's vessels running into her. Soon after this the commodore came up in the *Hartford* and ordered us all to anchor and take a little rest before attacking New Orleans, which was now within twenty miles.

By this time our ship had received thirty-two shots in masts and hull, and six of our men had been wounded; one of the boys had to have a leg cut off. All this time, night and day, fire-rafts and ships loaded with burning cotton had been coming down the river and surrounding us everywhere. Besides these, the bombardment was continuous and perfectly awful. I do not believe there ever was anything like it before, and I never expect to see such a sight again. The river and shore were one blaze, and the sounds and explosions were terrific. Nothing I could say would give you any idea of these last twenty-four hours.

At four the next morning, April 25, we all got under way again, the *Cayuga* still leading, and at about nine o'clock New Orleans hove in sight. We called all hands and gave three cheers and a tiger!

There were two more fortifications still between us and New Orleans, called the Chalmette batteries, but Captain Bailey thought they could not be of much account, and that we had best push on. When we arrived in sight of these batteries, no flag floated over them, and there was not a man to be seen — nothing but the guns, which seemed abandoned. In fact, though, there were a lot of treacherous rascals concealed in these batteries, and when we had come close enough to make them feel sure they could sink us, they opened a heavy fire. We gave them back as well as we could, but they were too much for one gunboat;

so, after getting hit fourteen times, the shot and shell striking all about us, we decided not to advance any farther until some of the ships came up. Soon we had the *Hartford* on one side and the *Pensacola* on the other, and then the Rebel battery was silenced very quick.

After this there were no further obstacles between us and the city, and the fleet were soon anchored before it. Captain Bailey was ordered to go on shore, and demand its surrender, and he asked me to go with him. We took just a boat and a boat's crew, with a flag of truce, and started off. When we reached the wharf there were no officials to be seen; no one received us, although the whole city was watching our movements, and the levee was crowded in spite of a heavy rainstorm.

They were all shouting and hooting as we stepped on shore, but at last a man, who, I think, was a German, offered to show us the way to the council-room, where we should find the mayor of the city.

As we advanced the mob followed us in a very excited state. They gave three cheers for Jeff Davis and Beauregard, and three groans for Lincoln. Then they began to throw things at us, and shout, "Hang them!" "Hang them!" We both thought we were in a bad fix, but there was nothing for us to do but just go on.

We reached the city hall, though, in safety, and there we found the mayor and council. The mayor said he had nothing to do with the city, as it was under martial law, and we were obliged to wait till General Lovell could arrive.

In about half an hour this gentleman appeared — by the way he is a perfect snob. He had about 15,000

troops under his command, and said he would "never surrender," but would withdraw his troops from the city as soon as possible, when the city would fall into the hands of the mayor and he could do as he pleased with it.

The mob had by this time become perfectly infuriated. They kicked at the doors and swore they would have us out and hang us. Of course Captain Bailey and I *felt perfectly at our ease all this while!* Indeed, every person about us, who had any sense of responsibility, was frightened for our safety. As soon as the mob found out that General Lovell was not going to surrender, they swore they would have us out anyway; but Pierre Soulé and some others went out and made speeches to them, and kept them on one side of the building while we went out the other, and were driven to the wharf in a closed carriage. Finally we got on board ship all right; but of all the blackguarding I ever heard in my life that mob gave us the worst.

The mayor told the flag-officer this morning that the city was in the hands of the mob, and was at our mercy, and that we might blow it up or do with it as we chose. They still fly the State flag on the custom-house, and as we have not yet any forces with which to land and make an attack, we can do nothing at present, unless we blow up the city.

I do not know where General Butler is. So far, only fourteen of our fleet have passed the forts out of all the ships that started. None of us know what has become of them and the forts have not yet surrendered. Until then, there can be no going up and down the river.

This morning we have been ordered to take Cap-

CAPTAIN BAILEY AND LIEUTENANT PERKINS FACING THE MOB AT NEW ORLEANS

[illegible] Bailey [illegible] a boat, and [illegible] bearer of despatches.

We expect to make another attack [illegible] to-morrow or next day. I believe [illegible] the troops. The Sourmen [illegible] of the greatest ever known. [illegible] our being able to pass the forts [illegible] had been made in the morning. [illegible] all have been sunk. We may be [illegible] the forts do not fall, and it is not safe [illegible] leave our ships and go anywhere in a boat. The mob rule in the city, and they are perfectly reckless. We are still feeling the effects of the excitement which the attack caused. Nothing is settled, and there is danger and risk about every movement.

I have written this letter at railroad speed. I am all right so far, as regards my health. We expect another good fight to-morrow or next day, when we go back to take the forts.

I hope you are all well at home. You must excuse this letter, for it seems as though I could not stop to form words. Should I ever see you again I can tell it all so much better. I cannot say yet how many men have been lost on our side, but I think the number is rather small.

If Bailey and Perkins on going to the mayor had taken an ordinary guard with them a conflict with the excited populace would have been inevitable, and women and children who formed no small part of the crowd would have

been among the victims. George W. Cable, the novelist, was a boy living in New Orleans at this time, and he records the impression made on him as he saw two unarmed officers walk alone through the mob, daunting even the most violent by their extraordinary courage.

What a gathering! The riff-raff of the wharves, the town, the gutters. Such women — such wrecks of women! And all the juvenile rag-tag. . . . The crowd on the levee howled and screamed with rage. The swarming decks answered never a word; but one old tar on the *Hartford*, standing with lanyard in hand beside a great pivot-gun, so plain to view that you could see him smile, silently patted its big black breech and blandly grinned.

And now the rain came down in sheets. About one or two o'clock in the afternoon (as I remember), I being again in the store with but one door ajar, there came a roar of shoutings and imprecations and crowding feet down Common Street. "Hurrah for Jeff Davis! Hurrah for Jeff Davis! Shoot them! Kill them! Hang them!" I locked the door on the outside and ran to the front of the mob, calling with the rest, "Hurrah for Jeff Davis!" About every third man had a weapon out. Two officers of the United States Navy were walking abreast, unguarded and alone, looking not to right or left, never frowning, never flinching, while the mob screamed in their ears, shook cocked pistols in their faces, cursed and crowded, and gnashed upon them. So through the gates of death those two men walked to the City Hall

tain Bailey down to a bayou, where he will pass out in a boat, and taking a ship below will proceed home, as bearer of despatches.

We expect to make another attack on the forts to-morrow or next day if General Butler arrives with the troops. The Southerners say our victory was one of the greatest ever known. They never dreamed of our being able to pass the forts; and if the attempt had been made in the daytime our fleet must surely all have been sunk. We may be in a bad fix now, if the forts do not fall, and it is not safe for any one to leave our ships and go anywhere in a boat. The mob rule in the city, and they are perfectly reckless. We are still feeling the effects of the excitement which the attack caused. Nothing is settled, and there is danger and risk about every movement.

I have written this letter at railroad speed. I am all right so far, as regards my health. We expect another good fight to-morrow or next day, when we go back to take the forts.

I hope you are all well at home. You must excuse this letter, for it seems as though I could not stop to form words. Should I ever see you again I can tell it all so much better. I cannot say yet how many men have been lost on our side, but I think the number is rather small.

If Bailey and Perkins on going to the mayor had taken an ordinary guard with them, a conflict with the excited populace would have been inevitable; and women and children, who formed no small part of the crowd, would have

the levee. This rain continued for some hours. In the midst of it a boat was seen to put off from a ship. It landed at the foot of Laurel Street, where a large crowd quickly gathered. Out of the boat stepped an elderly, corpulent officer with a very red face, a grave expression, and an air of command. He wore his sword, and was accompanied by a young and handsome naval officer. These proved to be Captain Bailey, second in command of the fleet, and Lieutenant Perkins. They asked the direction to the mayor's office. There was no one in the crowd to answer. They were told to find their own way. Accordingly they started up the street, in the pelting, furious rain, followed by the crowd, which increased in their progress, yelling and shouting, "Down with the Yankees!" "Kill them!" "Hang them!"

Several citizens here rushed forward to protect the officers. They were repelled and roughly handled by the furious mob. The Federal officers were in great danger. At last two venerable and much respected citizens — William Freret and L. E. Forstall, a member of the city council — made their way through the crowd, which was threatening the officers with speedy destruction, and each seizing the arm of one of the officers conducted them in safety to the mayor's office.

The mayor with his friends, several members of the city government, several prominent citizens, including Mr. Soulé, were present when Captain Theodorus Bailey and Lieutenant Perkins were introduced. Meantime a vast and excited crowd had collected around the city hall, whose shouts and cries could be distinctly heard within. Captain Bailey quickly stated his mission to the mayor. He came by order

of Commodore Farragut, commanding the fleet now in the port, to demand the surrender of the city and the elevation of the flag over the custom-house, the mint, the post-office, and the city hall.

The mayor replied: "I am not the military commander of the city. I have no authority to surrender it, and would not do it if I had. There is a military commander now in the city, who is charged by the Confederate States with the defenses of the city. To him your command must be addressed. I will send for him if you desire." Captain Bailey assented, and a messenger was despatched for General Lovell.

Presently there was a hurrah without — a parting of the crowd — and Major-General Lovell made his way up the steps and into the mayor's office. He was introduced to Captain Bailey, who declared his character and credentials, as second in command of the United States fleet now before the city.

General Lovell — "I am Major-General Lovell, Confederate Commander of this Department."

Captain Bailey then stated his mission in the same terms as he had made it known to the mayor, adding that he was instructed by Commodore Farragut to express his great regret at the destruction of private property in the city.

General Lovell — "In reply to his demand, say to Commodore Farragut that I decline to surrender the city, nor will I allow it to be surrendered; that being unable to fight him on water, I have sent my troops out of the city; that there are now no armed troops in the city, nothing but women and children, and if he desires to shell them he can do so on his own responsibility," etc., etc.

Lovell finally closed by saying that he would retire

and leave the city authorities to pursue their own course in the matter. For himself he would go back to the army with which he would be happy to meet them in fair and equal combat.

Captain Bailey replied, and again said how much Commodore Farragut regretted to see so much property uselessly destroyed.

General Lovell — "It was done by my orders, sir!" With this the interview terminated. Captain Bailey requested an escort back to his boat as a protection against the mob, who seemed to be very violent and threatening. It was suggested they be taken out through the rear of the building in charge of two Confederate majors, while Mr. Soulé and General Lovell addressed the crowd in front.

General Lovell restored the authority to the city officials as he had promised. To Farragut's further demand for the surrender of the city, and the hauling down of the flag of Louisiana from the city hall, Mayor Monroe made various evasive replies. It was finally a Union officer, instead of a Confederate, who lowered the objectionable flag, but Farragut by quiet insistence had gained the recognition of Federal supremacy.

On the 29th, Captain Bailey, who had gone down the river, brought back welcome news of the surrender of Forts Jackson and St. Philip. There had been hardly the necessity for immedi-

ate capitulation. The end was hastened by mutiny in the forts, where a considerable proportion of the defenders are said to have been foreigners.

The events of the last week of April were a surprising reversal of what the Confederates had expected. They had put such unlimited confidence in their impregnable forts that many were delighted when they discovered that the Union fleet was attempting to run past the forts, believing that Farragut was leading his ships into a certain trap. How quickly they were undeceived is shown by a remark of Colonel Higgins, of Fort Jackson, who seeing the large ships of Farragut's division pass in safety exclaimed, "Better go to cover, boys; our cake is all dough! The old navy has won!" [1]

The capture of New Orleans was of tremendous importance to the Union. This city was not only the largest and richest in the South, but an extremely valuable center of supplies, drawn from Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas, and sent on to the armies in Virginia and elsewhere. When the Union forces had taken New Orleans and its defenses, as well as Island No. 10, Fort

[1] D. D. Porter, *The Naval History of the Civil War*, p. 183.

Pillow, and Memphis, — all the achievements of spring, 1862, — they had accomplished a large part of the difficult project of gaining control of the Mississippi. With the capture of Vicksburg and Port Hudson the following year, the project was completed and the Confederacy was split in two.

The capture of New Orleans also had an important significance in our relations with Europe. It deterred France from action most unfavorable to the United States. Louis Napoleon had already suggested to England the advisability of recognizing the Confederate States, and just as Farragut was opening fire on Forts Jackson and St. Philip he was conferring with Mr. Lindsay, a member of the British Parliament and a Southern sympathizer. The Emperor expressed the opinion that the restoration of the Union was impossible, and deprecating the continuation of the war, he assured Mr. Lindsay that he would send a formidable fleet to the mouth of the Mississippi if England would coöperate with a like force, and they would demand free passage for their merchant ships bringing in supplies and taking out cotton.[1] Had

[1] *North American Review*, vol. CXXIX, p. 346.

the Government been coerced into abandoning the blockade of the Southern ports, it is doubtful if it could ever have brought the war to a successful termination.

The *Cayuga*, after the object of the expedition had been accomplished, was ordered North, carrying Captain Bailey, the bearer of official reports. She left on the 29th of April, when not only had the forts surrendered but the flag of the Union was flying from the top of the custom-house in New Orleans. On May 8 she passed Cape Henry and proceeded up to Hampton Roads.

Commodore Phythian, who happened to be there at this time, tells how his feelings were stirred as he heard the details of the battle and saw the riddled gunboat. The scars of the conflict were everywhere apparent, and they bore evidence of the courage of the lieutenant who stood on her forecastle and guided the ship through the fiery storm.

The conduct of Lieutenant Perkins did not fail of recognition on the part of his superior officers. Lieutenant Commanding Harrison, in his report of April 24 to Captain Bailey, says: —

It is needless for me to inform you, who had us under your own eye, that all did their duty fearlessly and well, but I must commend to your especial notice my executive officer, Lieutenant George H. Perkins. The remarkable coolness and precision of this young officer while aiding me in steering the vessel through the barrier and past the forts under their long and heavy fire, must have attracted your attention.[1]

Captain Bailey mentioned his gallantry with that of Lieutenant Commanding Harrison and Acting Master Morton in his report to Flag-Officer Farragut, saying in conclusion, "These officers have my unbounded admiration." [2]

In *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, published May 31, 1862, there appeared a spirited sketch by their artist, William Waud, who was on the spot, representing "The Landing of Captain Bailey and Lieutenant Perkins on the levee with a flag of truce to demand the surrender of the city." The *New Hampshire Patriot* of May 14, 1862, commended his service in the highest terms, but no praise could be more pleasing to him than a letter from his mother: —

I hear you very highly spoken of by every one. Your father was introduced to Professor Patterson as the "father of Lieutenant Perkins of the *Cayuga*."

[1] *Naval War Records*, vol. XVIII, p. 174. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 171.

Professor Patterson at once said he was familiar with your name and had seen an account of your bravery in the papers. I suppose now we shall be known as the relatives of the brave Lieutenant Perkins. I confess I do not realize you as famous. You seem to me the same little boy I used to scold about his spelling. The mothers all say you are so fortunate because you are so good and thoughtful of me.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE WEST GULF BLOCKADING SQUADRON

THROUGHOUT the war Perkins was, with one brief respite, in the lower Mississippi or on the Gulf coast. During the two years following the capture of New Orleans he saw no engagement of note, but he had an active part in the great blockade that was finally to force the South, exhausted, to give up the contest.

From Hampton Roads the *Cayuga* went to New York and was there nearly a month undergoing repairs. This afforded Perkins opportunity for a few days at home, and it is easy to imagine the enthusiasm with which he was received.

Soon he was again in New York, and he writes: —

> I have had a letter from Captain Harrison telling me that he is not coming back to his ship, and that he has applied for me at the department, but I hardly think I shall be detached.

Commander Donald M. Fairfax succeeded to the command of the *Cayuga*. He was an officer

of fine type, also an old friend of Perkins. He writes to Perkins: —

I was gratified yesterday to learn through Temple that you are still attached to the *Cayuga*, and are willing — learning that I am detailed to command her — to remain as her executive officer. I receive it as a compliment that my joining her determined you on staying by the little gunboat that acted so important a part in the great naval battle in the Mississippi.

Really it is the bright feature in joining to find you the first lieutenant; without flattery I say it, you are my choice. I shall be content to lie on my oars and give you full charge. So go ahead and do anything you think is necessary, as though really captain.

The following letter written by Perkins to his mother tells of the days in New York before sailing: —

Cayuga, BROOKLYN, June 4, 1862.

We are ordered to report to Commodore Farragut, and I think we shall be in time to assist in taking Mobile. After that, most of the hard work will be over, and then I hope to be at home again. I regret every day that I could not have come home once more before sailing, but there has been a good deal for me to do, and the captain has turned everything over to me. So I am obliged to be here every day. . . .

I have called on the commodore's family twice. He has told me to make his home my home while the ship lies here. He has three very nice daughters. I went

to the theater the other evening with a Miss Kellog, a niece of the commodore, a very beautiful girl from Troy, and was at her house last evening until a late hour. It is very lucky the ship is going to sail soon, for I have already half fallen in love.

The *Cayuga* left for the Gulf on June 10, but striking a severe storm sprung a leak and was obliged to return for repairs. She went into dry-dock and not until the 16th could she proceed on her journey.

The next letter, of July 21, was from Baton Rouge: —

We left New Orleans on the 19th and arrived here yesterday. It was exciting coming up the river. We had received information that 12,000 guerrillas were near Baton Rouge committing all sorts of depredations on the Union people.

We anchored one night to guard a poor woman whose husband had been taken by the Rebels the night before, and they threatened her, if she told, to come back and burn the house. I went ashore about ten o'clock at night to see that everything was right. It was a little risky, but I was not molested. Baton Rouge looks pretty from the river. We expect attacks every night, and I think rather than have us hold the place, they will destroy it.

I am having a rather hard time, for I am not well and am under the doctor's care. Being sick in this hot climate and in such small quarters on board ship is not very pleasant, and keeps one fretting all the time.

Tell father, I have drunk all the cider he gave me and it was just what I wanted this warm weather.

Two days later he continues: —

We did not have the attack last night that we expected, although the inhabitants left in great numbers. I am much better to-day and by to-morrow will be entirely well. I do not know when we shall leave here. There has been some hard fighting farther up the river. A ram, the *Arkansas*, passed through Davis's fleet and after that passed through most of Farragut's squadron. These things, I can assure you, are very disgusting. With the little means that the Rebels have to manufacture such a ram that they can build *one* and with that one make half of our vessels "skedaddle"! Farragut attacks the ram and the forts at Vicksburg to-morrow, but he will not be able to do anything with the forts there except run by them and that will do no good. They cannot be taken without an army in the rear.

The exploit of the *Arkansas* referred to occurred on July 15 just above Vicksburg, and was the cause of great chagrin on the part of Admirals Farragut and Davis as well as the Navy Department. That morning the combined fleets of the officers mentioned were lying at rest with fires banked. When the Confederate ironclad unexpectedly appeared from up the Yazoo River, where she had been building, not one of her foes was able to get up steam to ram her or

otherwise block her progress. The *Arkansas* endured a terrific bombardment as she ran the gauntlet; her pilot house was demolished, and her smokestack was so riddled that it became impossible to keep up steam; nevertheless aided by the tide she succeeded in crawling past to the protection of the batteries at Vicksburg. She lost ten men killed and fifteen wounded.

Farragut tried to atone for the reverse by the prompt measures he took for the destruction of the ram. That very evening he again ran the batteries at Vicksburg, hoping to discover the *Arkansas* in an exposed position where he might destroy her at her moorings, but without success. The incident gave the Confederates a ray of hope and stimulated them to fresh activity. The guerrillas became more annoying, and Perkins learned to know them, as the *Cayuga* was constantly employed in patrolling the river.

On July 28 he writes: —

> We arrived at the mouth of Red River in the morning, and had a short engagement with two of the Rebel gunboats, but as they were faster than we and drew less water, they escaped up Red River and we could not follow them. So we started down the river in the evening and ran ashore and were in great danger all night, for if the Rebel gunboats had known of

our being ashore, they would have come down and taken us.

The end of the dreaded *Arkansas* came on August 6, and the *Cayuga* was present and contributed her assistance. The Confederates had for some days been threatening an attack on Baton Rouge. To resist this General Butler had sent troops from New Orleans in transports, and the *Cayuga* had been detailed to accompany them and prevent the guerrillas from firing upon them. On the 5th the *Arkansas* had come down the river to a bend eight miles above Baton Rouge. Next morning Commodore William D. Porter commanding the *Essex* decided to attack her, and accompanied by the *Cayuga* and the *Sumter* advanced to a position two miles distant and opened fire. The *Arkansas* made an occasional response, but her engines broke down, as they had been constantly doing from the very first, and she ran into the bank. Lieutenant Stevens, commanding, realized the hopelessness of his position, and ordering the crew ashore set fire to the ram. Commodore Porter would have taken for himself all the credit for her destruction, and in his report described the action as fought at close range after the *Cayuga*, in dis-

obedience to orders, had retreated down the river. But a court of inquiry completely exonerated Commander Fairfax of the *Cayuga*, showing that his vessel remained with the *Essex* till the *Arkansas* was on fire, when Porter told him to return to Baton Rouge, as he was no longer needed.

Shortly after this the *Cayuga* was given duty in the Gulf and Perkins had a slight change described in the following letters: —

New Orleans, August 4 (?), 1862.

We are staying here for a short time before going to Pensacola, where we follow the fleet. I have met a good many of my old friends, driven on the famous shell road, and have been about to see the sights of the city; but I am disappointed in them, and everything strikes me as miserable and filthy. The people ought to have some gratitude to General Butler, for he is trying to get the city clean and he keeps good order.

Pensacola, August 20, 1862.

We do not have much to do. We take a short cruise every day to see what we can see, and exercise the men a little to keep their digestion in order; and the rest of the time is passed in sleeping and eating and reading. But some way or other I cannot read much. I believe I shall be an awfully nervous man when I get a little older.

August 21. Off Mobile. — We went cruising last

night for a prize, but did not get one, and we have just got back to our anchorage.

August 23. — It is a rainy, gloomy day, and if I had not slept from eight o'clock last night until eight o'clock this morning I should go to bed and sleep all day. But twelve hours on a stretch is as much as I can go. We are now running full speed after a brig; but she will turn out to be some of our vessels. And I wish the captain would stop, or else I shall have to, for when we are running full speed the engine shakes the ship so that it is almost impossible to write.

Off Mobile, August 24, 1862.

We have been from the Mississippi to Pensacola and back here, since I had a chance to send a letter. We stayed at Pensacola a week, and, as usual, I spent my spare time hunting and fishing. I have not had such a good chance for a long time, and there are quantities of game — wild turkeys, deer, all sorts of birds — in abundance.

How long we shall blockade here I do not know. I wish they would make an attack soon, and I shall be glad when the war is over. . . . It gets very monotonous on the blockade, though sometimes the sails appear fairly often, and we keep steam up all the time, and are on a continual chase.

When we are lying off Mobile, the Rebel boats come down and have a look at us, and we look at them, but there is to be no movement made towards the capture of Mobile for the present. Galveston has fallen into our hands without a struggle, and we are gradually getting all the forts on the Gulf. But Mobile is strongly fortified, and it will require ironclads to accomplish anything in this bay. I am sure

wooden vessels cannot do much. Buchanan has command of its naval defenses, and is building a powerful ironclad.

August 28, 1862.

I have been on shore hunting, and shot two beeves. This sport, is rather dangerous, as guerrillas are said to be plentiful, but it serves to vary our diet and the dullness of blockade duty. There are very severe gales off this bay, "northers" they are called; some of our blockading vessels have been almost destroyed by them. Our ship has escaped so far, but when these gales come, they make lively work for all hands.

Off Mobile, September 5, 1862.

Yesterday I went hunting after wild cattle and had a hard time. My party consisted of two armed boats' crews, and when we reached the shore, I sent two of my men ahead as scouts to look out for guerrillas, and then we started for some game.

After hunting all morning, and not seeing anything, I sent one boat off and took the other with a few men to go and pick up the scouts. We pulled a long way, but could not find them, and I was just turning about, when I saw a large drove of cattle on shore. We pulled up on the beach and four of us started to get a shot at them, but they caught sight of us and put for a swamp, and in we went after them. We then scattered, thinking our chances for a shot would be better; but after chasing an hour we lost them, and ourselves as well; and not only could we not find each other, but we could not find the boat.

We heard the ship firing for our return, and about the same time we discovered a Rebel steamer near

us. We thought we should certainly be found and taken prisoners. We did not dare to halloo for each other, nor make any signal to our vessel, which we could hear firing for us every few minutes. I knew the captain must have some very good reason for being so anxious, and I looked everywhere, trying to find my way; but none of my men were to be seen, and I came to the conclusion that they must all have been taken prisoners. I was bound that I would not be taken, so I hid myself in the woods until sunset, and then after it was dusk, went down to the beach and signaled for a boat. When the boat came the men said there was great anxiety about us on board ship, for they felt sure the Rebels had taken us prisoners. As soon as the boat and boat's crew came, I made signals and fired guns, for the three men who had gone after the cattle with me. To my great relief they soon made their appearance. They had been as badly scared as I was, and having come upon tracks of the enemy, had concluded that I must have been taken prisoner, and since then they had been hiding in the woods. Just about this time the boat that I had left, to go after the cattle, came along, and the scouts turned up, and we were all safe.

The men whom I had left in charge of the boat had undertaken to beguile the time by a sail, and getting to leewards a strong breeze sprang up, and they could not return to land till it went down. But at last we were all right, and got back to the ship safe and sound, and there was great rejoicing over our return. The captain had been very anxious about our fate, for he had seen the steamer and feared the Rebels on board had seen and taken us. How can Hammie or Frank beat this for a hunting story?

This afternoon we have had some more excitement. A large steamer made her appearance coming in from sea with the English colors set. Captain Preble of the *Oneida*, and Thornton of the *Winona*, blockading off this place, saw her, and both got under way, and the *Winona* stood for her; but Thornton soon decided that it must be an English man-of-war, and therefore stood off after another sail which hove in sight.

Then what they thought was an English man-of-war came dashing up to the *Oneida*, near enough for them to see that she carried five guns on a side, and a pivot gun forward, and as she got abreast of the *Oneida*, Captain Preble fired a shot across her bows to bring her to; he supposed she brought some important news, and he would board her, as she was within our lines. But the steamer stood on, and as soon as she passed the *Oneida*, hauled down her English colors and made for the harbor. She was very fast, and the *Oneida*, having but one boiler in use, was unable to catch her; so she reached Mobile in safety, and, no doubt, carried to the Rebels a valuable cargo of arms. It was a smart thing on the part of the Rebel captain.

September 11, 1862.

Since that English steamer ran the blockade here our fleet has been reinforced. We keep on the chase all the time after every sail that appears.

News comes that the Rebels are in force again near New Orleans. I cannot understand why our fleet is kept so inactive. A few gunboats, rightly handled, could have kept the Mississippi open from New Orleans to Vicksburg; but instead of being kept on such duty, they have been concentrated at ports,

while the river has been easily retaken by the Rebels, and there will be more hard fighting there yet.

September 14, 1862.

We have now seven gunboats here. This is getting to be a rendezvous for our men-of-war; but I do not know what they intend doing.

My captain is so scary and anxious about everything, that I cannot go hunting much; but yesterday I got ashore and shot two of the wild cattle about the swamps, and that helps out our table a good deal.

The only variety which we get nowadays, to the monotonous duty of blockading, is the awful wind, which blows a perfect gale here every few days, just at this season, and which does not make it any more agreeable.

I think there is no hope of any attack on Mobile at present. Galveston, as you know, is in the enemy's hands again, and Admiral Farragut has sent two boats to try and retake it. This ship is going to Pensacola, if it will stop blowing a gale long enough for us to start.

Off Mobile, October 4, 1862.

I have a chance to send home a line by ship *Island*, and I am going to write something, though my monotonous life does not give me a word worth saying, for we cruise about every day — but we see nothing.

Buchanan is hard at work inside Mobile Harbor, and has four very good gunboats, besides an ironclad.

I am getting to be an "old" lieutenant now, and will soon be ordered first lieutenant of a larger ship than this.

News comes that Captain Preble has been dismissed for letting that English steamer run the blockade.

October 6, 1862.

I wish they would make the attack here and have it over. I believe that a few ironclads could pass these forts successfully; and if we had some ironclads, we could dispense with this large fleet of wooden vessels.

Don't forget when you write to tell me every little thing — even the last new thing Poll has learned to say. The letters come so irregularly and I have so much time to think of home, that I am always fancying something happening there, and I want to know everything.

October 13, 1862.

A few days ago two large steamers, the *Cuba* and the *Alice* loaded with cotton ran the blockade in the night-time, and got clear. Since Captain Preble has been dismissed the commanding officer has been very vigilant, and we give chase to every sail that heaves in sight. I am sorry for Captain Preble and hope he will get back, for he has been in the navy all his life — has a family, and nothing but his pay.

The weather has changed and is cold enough for New Hampshire, and my fingers are so numb I can hardly write. We are lying now very near Mobile Bay — just beyond the range of the forts. The Rebel steamers come out and have a look at us, and positively it seems strange that they are our enemies. But if I do not realize it now, probably I shall some day; perhaps before the winter is over.

We do not get much that is good to eat, and fresh provisions come along irregularly, and last only about three days.

NEW ORLEANS, November 2, 1862.

We arrived here from Pensacola and went up the river at once to attack some Rebel gunboats, but we could not find them. We went up as far as Baton Rouge, but were not molested by anything except the sharpshooters on the levee, but we did not lose any men.

I have just received my orders to report to Commodore Morris for duty as executive officer on board the *Pensacola*. She is one of the finest vessels in the navy, carries a battery of twenty-six large guns, and has about 400 men. It is a promotion for me, and I shall have to work hard.

The *Pensacola* will remain here this winter to protect the city, and you must direct all your letters here. Captain Fairfax has spoken very highly of me to every one, and he does not want me to leave him. . . .

I called on Mrs. Butler the other day. She seemed glad to see me. I took dinner with the general. I also met General Shipley last night. They were all very polite, but you can hardly imagine the rascality and depravity that is carried on in this city.

U.S. STEAMER *Pensacola*, NEW ORLEANS,
November 5, 1862.

I have left the *Cayuga* and am almost settled on board this ship. . . . I have a great deal to do; everything is new to me, as I have been on small ships so much, and I am very busy. I have a fine room, a clerk, and a boy, all to myself. But I was almost always happy on board the *Cayuga*. Captain Fairfax was very sorry when I left, and I believe every one else was.

I have been a witness for the last few days in the court of inquiry [ordered to investigate the part taken by the *Cayuga* in the destruction of the *Arkansas*]. Captain Fairfax has come out with flying colors, and I am glad of it. . . .

What an awful war this is. It would make your heart ache to see the destruction of Rebel property on this river. The army officers are quartered in the finest houses in the city. Stealing and depravity of every kind is going on.

Christmas, 1862.

I stayed on board ship all day, and as I soon fell to thinking about you all at home, I had a fit of home-sickness. So I am going to begin a letter, though as usual I have little to write about except myself. . . . We had a good dinner to-day — that is we had plenty of food that ought to have been better than it was. I thought of your mince pie and nice cooking and my last Christmas at home.

New Orleans, January 3, 1863.

We have bad news to-night from Galveston, Texas. The Rebels attacked three of our gunboats; with four river boats they took the *Harriet Lane*, boarding her, and causing the others to blow themselves up. Captain Wainwright of the *Harriet Lane*, Captain Renshaw of the *Westfield*, and Lieutenant Lea were killed besides several other officers and men. Their army attacked our troops on shore at the same time and have killed or captured them all. . . .

There will be a great deal of desperate fighting here; and if we do not look out we shall be whipped out of the river. We are all very inactive. The army

is completely demoralized. The miserable speculators, instead of being hanged when they are caught, and they are caught very often, are merely imprisoned a few days, and then they return to their dishonest business with double energy. General Banks is too easy and the country looks as though it were *going to the old Harry*.

I suppose I am having a very pleasant time here, but I must say I am willing to leave. Our vessel being the largest and finest we have a great many lady visitors and I receive many invitations to the homes in the city. I had a pleasant call last night on a young lady that owns a large plantation and plenty of negroes. I think it would be rather dangerous for me if the times were not just as they are. . . . I am going to-morrow night with Mrs. Maloney, wife of the Maloney whom I wrote you about, to take tea and pass the evening with a Mrs. Converse, who is a rather nice lady. During the evening I expect to meet several young ladies, who of course cannot be fashionable unless they are *secesh*. I am sorry I made the engagement to go, for I do hate a secessionist. But I shall go in full uniform, and have as good a time as I can.

January 27, 1863.

Things look very shaky, and there seems no head nor tail in either the army or the navy. Spies here come and go at will, and the chief and worst ones are ladies of the best families. They take the oath of allegiance, and ask permission to pass our lines for the purpose of getting a few supplies for their children, who, they say, are starving; but when once through, they get everything they can sew up in their skirts — quinine

and everything else — and their supply comes from our army stores. They get it no matter if it is contraband of war. One lady boasted that she wanted nothing more within our lines; that she had carried through over 200 hundred ounces of quinine within the last week. . . .

As you like to know all the compliments that are paid me, I will tell you one that I had the other day from General Weitzel. He wants me to take command of a fleet of gunboats in Berwick Bay. He is getting up an expedition of 10,000 men and a fleet of gunboats to go up through the bayous into Red River, and he wants me to take command of the naval force. He said to me, — "Perkins, you are the only man that I know of fitted to go through the desperate fighting we shall have; but with you in command of those gunboats and me with my troops, we can face the devil, and are bound to win. But unless you will go with me, I have my doubts about succeeding, and I shall think twice before I go. . . ."

A Rebel quartermaster has just been caught with a list of the articles he intended to purchase within our lines of our sutlers, though to be sure he had taken the oath of allegiance. He will probably be imprisoned a few days and then let out, when he will at once go back to the same rascally business, and we shall go on furnishing the Rebel army and people with food and medicines. It makes me fairly vexed and unhappy to see the United States and its Government and its soldiers, so scoffed and cheated and jeered at by the Rebels. . . .

My next gayety is to be a party up the river. We are going to visit a large sugar plantation of some reputation; but that will wind up my visiting, as I

ought not to leave the ship much, for Commodore Morris is growing more feeble, and I do not believe he can hold out much longer. I hope the captain who takes his place will be as fine an officer and gentleman as he is.

It would do you good to see the *Pensacola* now. She is one of the finest ships in the navy, and by having my own way, I have got her in splendid order, and the crew perfectly drilled.

January 23, 1863.

The other morning I received orders from the Admiral to take command of the *Cayuga* and go to Galveston to assist in retaking it. I was delighted with the orders, for I hate to lie here inactive, and I made all haste to be off to her; but when the mail steamer arrived, whom should it bring but Captain McDerrit, who had been ordered at the department to relieve Captain Fairfax as her commander, and my hopes are dashed.

New Orleans, April 21, 1863.

The *Naval Register* states that I have been a lieutenant-commander since December 13, 1862, but I have not received any notification of it from the department.

During the months that followed, Grant and Porter were completing the investment of Vicksburg, while Banks and Farragut were operating against Port Hudson, both of which strongholds fell during early July. Meanwhile the Confederate forces in the Southwest had been far from

idle. They had, as narrated by Perkins in his letters, retaken Galveston. And when General Banks had withdrawn his troops from the Red River country so as to concentrate upon Port Hudson, General Taylor of the Confederate Army proposed the uniting of Walker's division with his own at Alexandria, Louisiana, when the combined forces should take the open road to the south. With the 7000 or 8000 men whom he would have, he promised either to capture New Orleans or else compel Banks to hasten to its succor and thus raise the siege of Port Hudson. But, fortunately for the Union cause, Taylor was overruled by Kirby Smith, who ordered Walker's division to remain in the vicinity of Vicksburg, thus limiting Taylor's force to 3000 men.

Disappointed but not discouraged, Taylor moved south in two detachments. One of these on June 18 reached Plaquemine (between Baton Rouge and Donaldsonville on the Mississippi), and captured the little garrison of seventy men and burned two steamers. Both detachments arrived at Brashear City four days later and attacking simultaneously captured the entire force there, variously estimated at from 300 to 1700 men. This success had some importance

to the Confederates, for it gave Taylor's force abundant supplies and afforded a ready access to the La Fourche country to the east, with the Western Railroad leading to New Orleans.

Losing no time, Taylor collected the supplies which he had captured, sent part of his forces against Donaldsonville, and with the rest advanced towards New Orleans, his pickets being only twenty-five miles distant. The city was almost without defenders, and its danger caused no small alarm. At Donaldsonville there were but 180 men in the garrison, but with the aid of three Union gunboats in the river they succeeded in beating off 1400 Confederates who attacked them at half-past one on the morning of June 28. The latter then took a position a few miles down the river where they erected batteries commanding its navigation. Thus not only was New Orleans threatened from the La Fourche, but all communications with General Banks by transports were cut off. It was at this crisis that Perkins was given important duty as described in the following letter: —

U.S.S. *New London*, July 4, 1863.

I am on my way down the river, and shall soon be in New Orleans. I have taken command of this vessel

until her captain comes from Mobile; but after that I expect to go back to the *Pensacola*. My duty is to convey powder to Banks's army. I left New Orleans in the evening, convoying the steamer *North America* as far as Donaldsonville. The river is now in possession of the Rebels from about forty miles above New Orleans to Donaldsonville, and they fire on all our vessels and destroy our transports. I have been up all night, and have had a hard and lively time. Within two miles of Donaldsonville a Rebel battery opened on us with artillery and sharpshooters. We were struck several times and had a spirited engagement. I got the *North America* by all right, with only four shots through her, and then, leaving her at Donaldsonville, I returned to the scene of action, and kept it up till they stopped firing. On my way down I trained my guns on everything I could see, as I was determined to make them pay dear for their whistle this time; but the levee is so high that one is not able to see anything behind it, and the Rebels mass their sharpshooters at different points and fire into our gunboats when they pass; and, although we blaze away back, we do not get a fair revenge. In fact, the Rebels are now doing pretty much as they please everywhere. They come and go freely, in and out of New Orleans, and all our affairs are in a confused and disorganized state.

The efficient manner in which Perkins handled his ship did not fail to attract notice. Captain T. A. Jenkins, reporting an engagement, July 7, between the Confederate batteries below Donaldsonville and the Union fleet, says, "Lieuten-

ant-Commander Perkins, in command of the *New London*, fought his vessel admirably." [1] And General Banks, as he wrote to Admiral Farragut, July 8, announcing the surrender of Port Hudson, suggests Perkins as one who would enable them to atone for the reverses on the river and in the La Fourche:—

> All the light-draft boats should be ordered down at once [to Berwick Bay]. . . . I hope Captain Wiggin and Captain Perkins may be put in command, as they know the localities and are energetic in action.[2]

Banks's plan was not carried out, however, and Perkins's command of the *New London* ended with a misfortune. This is related in his letter of July 29:—

> Since I wrote you last I have been through more excitement, and it seems to me as if I had been in more danger than ever before in my life; and I am going to try and describe to you my last trip in the *New London*.
>
> I had passed the Whitehall Point batteries in her successfully five times, but on the sixth trip, when the *New London* was returning to New Orleans, just as she was passing those batteries, at about quarter past one, on the morning of the 10th of July, the enemy discovered her, and opened with artillery and sharp-shooters. One shot struck the *New London's* boiler,

[1] *Naval War Records*, vol. xx, p. 334. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 262.

which exploded, severely scalding six men, and another shot penetrated the steam drum. This disabled the vessel, and I ordered her to be run toward the eastern bank, but the escaping steam made it impossible for the helmsman to remain at the wheel, and the ship grounded within range of the battery. The gunboat *Winona*, which had been ordered to escort the *New London* past Whitehall Point, ran away at the first shot, and was out of sight by this time. I fired rockets to inform her of my danger and to summon her to my assistance, but received no response.

We were at the mercy of the sharpshooters, and every shot dealt death and destruction. My first lieutenant was shot through the head, and the men now became so terrified that they began to leap overboard. I then ordered a boat to be manned and kedged off the ship astern, till she drifted downstream out of the way of the upper battery. But the most powerful fortification of the battery was still below us; so I towed the ship to the eastern bank and made her fast; but danger pursued me here, and it was soon plain that I had only gained a respite from the murderous fire, for I could see the enemy cutting embrasures to move their guns down for a better range, and I knew that daylight would seal the fate of my ship and crew.

I determined to save them if I could. I sent the ship's company ashore under the protection of the levee, where they could use their muskets to repel an attack, and stationed pickets along the road. I then despatched messengers by land to Donaldsonville, where General Weitzel was, for assistance, and sent a boat by the river to the *Monongahela* and the *Essex*

with the same request. These two ships were stationed some miles below on the river to protect an encampment of our troops on the eastern bank.

The messengers returned from Donaldsonville saying no assistance could be rendered; while, with regard to the success of those I sent by the river I felt very doubtful, so much was the passage of the Whitehall Point batteries dreaded. Just at this time information was brought me that a force of Rebel cavalry — 500 strong — was only a few miles in the interior. I felt desperate, for I realized the whole peril of the situation, and I was determined that my ship and crew should not fall into the hands of the enemy. I resolved to follow the dictates of my own judgment. I knew that upon a personal application Weitzel would at once grant me anything I wanted. I went ashore, and capturing a horse that was tied to a fence, I rode back to Donaldsonville. Arrived opposite, I signaled to the *Princess Royal* to send a boat for me, and, to save time, I first demanded assistance from her senior officer; this he thought fit to refuse.

The *Princess Royal* was one of our gunboats stationed at Donaldsonville to protect and help Weitzel. I immediately hastened to him, and without delay he started a body of troops down the river for my assistance. But when I returned to the spot where I had left the *New London* I found her gone, and I concluded — rightly, as it afterwards proved — that the boat I had sent early in the morning had succeeded in reaching our ships, and that they had come up and taken her off. I found afterwards that it was the ironclad *Essex*, and it towed her directly to New Orleans.

This was a great relief to me, for now the lives of

my men were safe, and the ship was still under its own flag; but I began to realize that my own position was now one of considerable danger. I fastened the horse I had so unceremoniously borrowed to the spot I first found him, and then hired a negro to drive me, in any sort of vehicle he could get, down the levee road to our lines. This proved to be a carryall harnessed to a mule; but it was the best he could do. I took the back seat, and laid my loaded pistols by my side close under my hand. At the negro's earnest entreaty I put on my uniform coat wrong side out, that it might not attract attention, and so I started — a Union officer, miles from our troops — on my passage through the enemy's country, along a road where Rebel troops, bands of guerrillas and sharpshooters were usually in constant movement. . . . Around a grocery shop which I passed there were lounging a group of armed Rebels. My driver was terribly frightened at this, and kept saying, "Set back, massa, for God's sake, set back! Mebbe dey won't see you!" And then whipped up his mule till we were safe beyond their reach.

But I had been seen and suspected by the Rebel troops on the other side of the river, and they had sent a boat and some soldiers across to capture me. They reached the bank on my side, landed, and came up the road to intercept me just as I was nearing our lines. Fortunately all this was perceived by our troops, and a body of cavalry was sent out, which captured the Rebels and conducted me in safety to the camp by one and the same proceeding. Here I found one of our ships — the *Monogahela* — and I went on board of her in a perfectly exhausted condition. Flinging myself in a bunk I slept soundly for

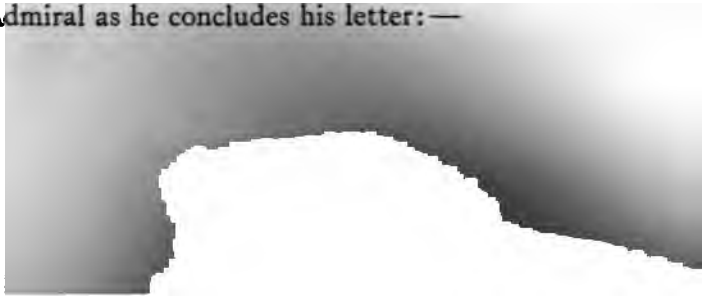
hours, undisturbed by the fact that a short time before, while lying in that very same place, the captain of the *Monongahela* — Abner Read — had been killed by a Rebel shot which penetrated the ship's side and struck him, and that his dead body was then on board, being conveyed to New Orleans.

I roused myself next morning in order to continue my journey to New Orleans in a commissary wagon, but when daylight dawned I saw a gunboat coming down the river in command of my friend Captain Cooke and I went on board of her and made the rest of my trip by water.

Admiral Farragut admired the young officer's bravery, but considered he had acted unwisely in one particular. This he called his attention to by reminding him of the principle, "A commander should be the last person to leave the ship even for succor." As he repeated this in reporting the matter to the department, he added: —

His conduct was represented as cool. He made every disposition of his men, and managed his vessel with ability.

On the 13th of July, Admiral Farragut ordered Perkins to deliver over the command of the *New London* to Lieutenant-Commander Potter and resume his former duties on the *Pensacola*. There is shown a kindly spirit on the part of the Admiral as he concludes his letter: —



I regret this necessity, but seniority must have its precedence, and it is for no misconduct that you are relieved. I am satisfied that you acted to the best of your judgment in the case of the disabling of the *New London*.

Perkins's next duty gave proof, even more positive, of Farragut's good opinion.

NEW ORLEANS, July 31, 1863.

The Admiral has given me command of the *Sciota*. She is a fine gunboat and a good command for me. He promised me a good command when I was relieved from the *New London*, and he has kept his word. Commodore Morris left the *Pensacola* this afternoon. The old gentleman felt very sad, and so did we, for we all loved him very much. He was so feeble that he had to be lowered over the side in a chair, and I am afraid he will not live to get home.

The *Sciota* will lie off this city about a month. She is a regular naval gunboat, and carries four 24-pound howitzers, one 11-inch gun, and one Parrott gun, and her officers and crew number 115 men, all told.

Tell Uncle Paul that I am the youngest officer at this time that has such a command. I expect my destination is to be blockade duty somewhere off Galveston, Texas.

For the next four months the *Sciota* lay in the Mississippi. During the period of waiting her young captain had to combat that most insidious foe, more dreaded in the river than the enemy's strongest batteries, yellow fever.

Dr. Henry W. Birkey, the ship surgeon, gives a glimpse of the terrible experience and of the captain's fortitude in a letter written forty-five years later to Commodore Perkins's daughter:—

I can see your father as he stood in the gangway of the ship as I boarded the *Sciota*. . . . As he held out his hand to me as I stepped on the quarterdeck he looked grave, but smiled and said, "I am glad you have come, doctor." I replied, "Captain, with your permission I will go at once and attend to the sick men." "I will go with you," was his answer. We passed along the waist of the ship forward, and it was a scene never to be forgotten. Many of those stricken by the yellow fever (two thirds of the crew were down with it) had stayed on deck to get fresh air; it was stifling below, although they had wind sails. The topgallant forecastle was full of them; others were lying beside or against the bulwarks and hammock cloths, and one or two in the shade of the 11-inch gun amidships. Some appeared to be either dead or dying. After we had seen them all and I had given orders how they should be cared for, your father said to me, "Doctor, come with me into the cabin." Then he said, "It is terrible to see those poor fellows suffering." He never spoke of himself, although he was shut up in midstream on the Mississippi on board ship with such an awful pestilence and the dead and dying around him. Two medical officers, my friends, had already died and I was kept busy. Your father's ship, the *Sciota*, had been raised from the bottom of the river and was full of ooze and mud among her timbers; . . . the fever was

in the fleet, and she became as it were a hotbed. . . . I left him calm, as he always was in the greatest danger, one of the bravest gentlemen I ever knew. All his friends loved him.

It was not until the very last of November, 1863, that Perkins received his sailing orders and put to sea. The *Sciota* was to be a factor in the great blockade that began with Hampton Roads and extended over 3000 miles to the Rio Grande, — a blockade which in magnitude has never been equaled. The points especially watched on the Texas coast were Sabine Pass, Galveston, Pass Cavallo, Aransas, and Corpus Christi. The *Sciota* patrolled a long stretch of this coast, dividing the time almost equally between the first three places mentioned. Early in the war there had been several Union successes on the Texas coast, but the towns and harbors gained had not been held for lack of troops. After the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson, Texas had become less important to the Confederacy as a source of supplies, and the Government at Washington thought it hardly worth while to reoccupy its ports. Nevertheless, it ordered the West Gulf Squadron to continue in the blockade, both to prevent the Confederates from becoming

too active in the Southwest and to avoid the European complications that would have resulted from the encouragement to trade with the South if part of the blockade had been abandoned.

Admiral Mahan, as a lieutenant on the *Seminole*, had a part in this same blockade, and he speaks of the desperately tedious duty when even "the largest reservoirs of anecdotes were sure to run dry." The supply vessels, he remarks, came periodically, but though they reached the blockade off Charleston with papers not very late and fresh provisions not very long slaughtered, at Galveston and Sabine Pass they could furnish only stale news and the bottom tier of fresh beef. He says further: —

> The dead monotony of the blockade was neither sea nor port. It supplied nothing. The crew, once drilled, needed but a few moments each day to keep at the level of proficiency; and there was practically nothing to do, because nothing happened that required a doing or undoing. . . . [After six months' duty there the *Seminole* was] recalled in mercy to New Orleans. I have never seen a body of intelligent men reduced so nearly to imbecility as my shipmates then were.[1]

[1] Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, p. 174, 175. Copyright, 1906, 1907, by Harper & Brothers.

It is not strange that in such a life Perkins's thoughts dwelt very often on home. His brothers, Roger, Hamilton, and Frank, — all younger than he, — were at the age when moulding influences are so powerful. There was uppermost that most important subject of young manhood, the choice of profession. Perkins's letters are full of sympathy and interest. As Miss Perkins observes, many fathers are not so anxious about their sons as he was at this time for his brothers. Roger, after a slight trial of business, thought of enlisting in the army and taking part in the war. But Perkins, fearing that he might thus sacrifice his career, urged him not to, and expressed great satisfaction when later he decided to study medicine. Perkins also wrote many letters to Hamilton, and tried to help him by his own experience when in 1863 Hamilton entered the Naval Academy. The youngest brother, Frank, was then fifteen years old. He is said to have been unusually promising, and Perkins plans that he shall be "the home boy, going into business in Concord to be near the family." The family finances at this time were not very prosperous, and Perkins generously offered Roger the funds necessary for his

medical education at Harvard. The means, however, were found elsewhere.

A glimpse of life on the blockade off the Texas coast is furnished by Perkins's letters written in the winter of 1863–64. Even on this dreary duty he shows his active nature by having an occasional adventure,—just as earlier when cruising for slavers on the African coast.

I do nothing but read and build castles in the air, for no sails appear within the lines of coast allotted to me. Once in three weeks the steamer comes along with our letters and provisions — fresh meat, potatoes and onions. Once or twice I have ventured on shore, but it is very risky, and the last time I was so nearly captured that it is a wonder now that I am not either shot or a prisoner of war. I would go ashore, just for a change, and, being unknown, would venture into the towns and villages, buying something at the stores and looking about a little, and even make some friends who did not know my name; but the last time that I tried this a man said to me, "I know you; you are the captain of that Yankee gunboat that blockades off here." Some one with whom I had been sociable contradicted him. A crowd began to gather, and while they were disputing who I was, I hurried to my boat, hidden in a cove, but not before they had started in pursuit of me and got pretty close, too. I was well frightened, for if I had not got away, it would have been an awful scrape, even if my life had been saved.

We have had a steady gale of wind which has

blown for weeks without cessation, and the ship has done nothing but roll, roll, roll, all the time, and we are perfectly tired out.

The monotony was occasionally varied by a brush with the enemy, who had erected batteries at several places along the coast, or by a reconnoissance with the army. The following letter, written by Perkins to the department, reports one of the latter affairs: —

U.S. Gunboat *Sciota*,
Off Galveston, January 3, 1864.

In obedience to your orders of the 16th ultimo, I proceeded to the Rio Grande, arrived there on the 19th December, and boarded the brig *Penniman*, from New York, under English colors, and anchored in our waters. She had an assorted cargo. The captain being at Matamoras with all the papers, I sent an officer to Matamoras to communicate with our consul and ascertain if the brig's papers were correct. The officer returned the following day and stated that the consul had certified that the brig and her papers were correct.

Left the Rio Grande on the evening of the 21st instant, and arrived at Pass Cavallo the next day and reported to Captain Strong for duty. December 28, I received orders from Captain Strong to proceed up the coast about thirty miles in company with the *Granite City*, which had on board 100 troops, and assist in landing them, then proceed with General Ransom on board for the purpose of reconnoitering the coast as far as Brazos River. At twelve o'clock

that night I got under way, and assisted in landing the troops at Smith's Landing the next morning, and then proceeded up the coast, and when off San Bernard River discovered that the enemy had 2000 or 3000 men at work throwing up breastworks on the northern bank of the river. I fired a few shells and dispersed them. On arriving at the Brazos River, I found two forts on each side of the river, mounting seven guns; breastworks thrown up in the rear of the forts, and large numbers of troops at work upon them. Fired several shots at the works. At five P.M. returned to Smith's Landing, arriving there about eight o'clock. Captain Lamson, of the *Granite City*, reported that our troops had been attacked by about 800 Rebel cavalry, and that our troops had intrenched themselves behind logs of wood, and at sundown with his assistance had succeeded in keeping them in check. The *Granite City* having used up all of her ammunition, I sent Captain Lamson to report to Captain Strong and get his assistance. Owing to a heavy swell I was unable to communicate with or get the troops off. I anchored as near them as possible, and as they were continually attacked, I was obliged to keep up a constant fire all night. On the following morning, there being a heavy fog, we were unable to see our troops until about ten o'clock, and at the same time discovered a Rebel steamer on the opposite side of the peninsula, apparently landing troops. I opened fire upon her with my rifle, and compelled her to change her position, she going farther from us and opening fire with her guns upon our troops, obliging them to abandon their breastwork and to proceed down the coast, we convoying them until dark, when losing sight of them we anchored.

During the night the wind changed to the northward, and in the morning the swell having gone down, we proceeded down the coast, and when about fifteen miles from Pass Cavallo overtook our troops. We embarked them, and at seven o'clock anchored off Pass Cavallo. The following afternoon I sent the troops back to their camp by the *Granite City*.[1]

Lieutenant-Colonel Hesseltine commanding the troops engaged in this reconnoissance says in his report: —

Captain Perkins, of the *Sciota*, excited my admiration by the daring manner in which he exposed his ship through the night in the surf till it broke all about him, that he might, close to us, lend the moral force of his 11-inch guns and howitzers, and by his gallantry in bringing us off during the gale.[2]

The seven months Perkins spent in blockading the Texas coast did not end without a substantial success. On April 4, 1864, he captured a prize, the *Mary Sorley*. She was a very fast schooner that previous to the war had been a United States revenue cutter stationed at Galveston.

It was a dark, stormy night with a heavy wind from the north — ideal conditions for a small blockade-runner to elude a single Union gunboat

[1] *Naval War Records*, vol. xx, p. 743 [2] *Ibid.*, p. 748.

lying outside the bar. But Perkins, suspecting that an attempt might be made, had urged the lookouts to be extra vigilant. They reported the schooner just as she glided past. Immediately word was given on the *Sciota* to slip the anchor and, stirring up the fires which had been partly banked, put on a full head of steam. The chase began in dead earnest, but before the *Sciota* was well under way the schooner had been swallowed up in night. The pursuit then became mere guesswork and the hope of making a capture grew fainter and fainter. The blockade-runner was undoubtedly bound for Cuba, and when last seen was on the usual course, which would take her well out to sea. But Perkins, instead of following this, soon changed his course to the east and hugged the shore. Luck was with him, and the shadowy outlines were again sighted. If before on the *Sciota* there had been excitement, it was now doubled. The schooner had such speed that with the favoring wind she could make almost as many knots as the gunboat. And, as she showed no lights, by gaining even a slight advantage she might still make her escape in the darkness. But the *Sciota* clung to her, and drawing up inch by inch finally came

close enough to hail. In answer to Perkins's demand, she then hove to. She was found to be loaded with 257 bales of sea cotton, which especially during the war was a valuable cargo for a small craft. Perkins put a prize crew on board and sent her to New Orleans for adjudication. He expected $3000 or $4000 as his own share, but because of the corruptness of the prize courts of New Orleans, as he thought, the award to the officers and crew of the *Sciota*, was only half her value.

Soon after the taking of the *Mary Sorley*, Perkins had assurance that he was to be relieved from duty on the blockade. He waited eagerly for the arrival of the supply steamer which should bring the officer who was to take over the command of his ship, but was doomed to disappointment. Nearly two months later the heading of his letter is still, "Off Sabine Pass, Texas."

> The *Circassian* to-day brought me only one letter from my home, and did not bring me my relief. He has been ordered some time, and I fully expected him in this steamer. I find waiting for him a very tantalizing business, and I fall back on thinking that whatever happens, I certainly shall not be left here all summer. . . .

It seems like a living death to be on the blockade. When the *Circassian*, which is here now, goes, it will be twenty days before we see another sail. We get all talked out on board ship, and sometimes a week passes and I do not speak a word, except those which my duty requires. There is very little variety on my blockade, though it is an extensive one, stretching from Port Cavallo to Sabine Pass, and now it is past time for my relief to come and I feel very impatient.

One would think I might grow fat leading such a quiet life, but I stick at the old notch where I have been for five years, and weigh only 115 pounds.

The relief came the very last of June, and Perkins was free to go North and see the home that had been so constantly in his thoughts during the preceding months. But before he should see his home, Farragut had service for him, service that was to rank him among the distinguished commanders of the Civil War.

CHAPTER VII

THE BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY

AFTER the capture of New Orleans, if Farragut had been permitted to plan the next operations, instead of ascending the Mississippi and making two futile attacks on Vicksburg, he would have proceeded against Mobile. At the time it would have been an easy capture. Two years later, when the department ordered the occupation of Mobile Bay, the undertaking was much more formidable. The Confederates had vastly improved their defenses; not only had they strengthened the forts commanding the entrances to the bay, but they had made the important addition of several gunboats and the ironclad *Tennessee*, a ram patterned after the *Merrimac;* while another ironclad, the *Nashville*, was approaching completion. Farragut informed the department that he must have the support of several monitors and a land force before beginning offensive operations. These were promised, but were not available till six months later. Meanwhile Farragut was lying

outside the bay, compelled to be inactive, although he knew the enemy were making the most of their long warning.

Perkins, while waiting at New Orleans for a steamer to take him North, after being relieved of the command of the *Sciota*, heard that Farragut was about to move on Mobile. There followed a characteristically prompt change in his plans. All thought of rest at home forgotten in the opportunity for action, he sought Farragut at his station off Mobile Bay and offered to remain and take part in the approaching battle. It happened that Farragut had just been given two new monitors made by James B. Eads at St. Louis for service on the Mississippi. Although Porter, then in charge of them, was of the opinion that they were not sufficiently seaworthy to go to Mobile, the imperative need decided Farragut to try them. Perkins was given command of one of these, and on July 18 was ordered to go to New Orleans and return with his vessel.

Perkins writes from New Orleans as follows:—

July 22, 1864.

I arrived here from Texas a few days ago, and have taken command of a large double-turreted monitor

named the *Chickasaw*. I volunteered to take command of her during the fight, which is to come off so soon at Mobile. I hope I shall be successful and come out all right. I shall write you again in a few days, or as soon as I get off Mobile — anyway, by the time you receive this the action will be over. . . .

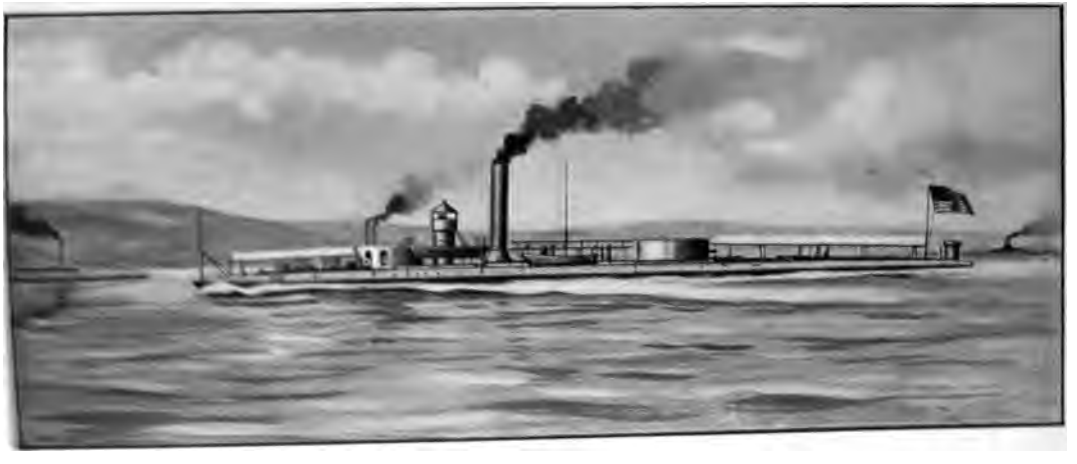
I have not time to accept any of the many invitations I receive. I have not even time to write, but will write a long letter to mother as soon as I can. She must not worry about me. I hope everything will come out for the best. Life is not very long anyway, and I am not afraid to die. I should only dread leaving you all at home.

July 27, 1864.

I shall go to sea to-morrow night, and as soon as the ironclads arrive off Mobile the fight will come off. I have a large command for my rank — a crew of 145 men and 25 officers. She carries four 11-inch guns and has two turrets, and you can judge of her power by the fact that it requires fifteen engines to work her.

I am very busy, and am writing at this moment among a lot of mechanics, who are working as fast as they can to get the ship in order. There is so much noise, and there is so much to be done that I can hardly think. The cabin is so hot that I cannot stay in it. When we are under steam the thermometer, below decks, goes up to 150°, and in the engine-room to 214°. You have heard of the man who lived in an oven! Well, the cabin of the monitor does not leave much for the imagination to do in considering his case. I am hurrying everything all I can, and live in the midst of confusion.

I hope to come home after the fight, as I volun-



UNITED STATES MONITOR, CHICKASAW

teered only for that fight; everything will be for the best. Dear mother, I think of you more than ever now, and you will always be with me. I shall write you when I get to sea. The fight will be over before you receive this, so you must think I am safe. I should like to have seen you once more before this fight. Remember, if I get killed it will be an honorable death, and the thought should partly take away your sorrow.

The voyage to Mobile Bay was not without adventure. Admiral Porter had predicted that in the least swell the *Chickasaw* would break to pieces. But though the monitor encountered rough weather during the passage, Perkins braved the storm and kept on till he had reached his destination. The real peril, which indeed all but prevented the *Chickasaw* from ever going to Mobile, had been met in the Mississippi. It was when the monitor was nearing the bar at the mouth of the river. Perkins had been called away from the pilot house by something requiring attention outside. Glancing up a moment later, he saw the course had been changed and that the ship was heading for a wreck close aboard. The striking of this would have meant serious damage to the monitor, not unlikely its total loss. Perkins rushed back to the pilot

house, and wrenching the wheel from the hands of the pilot spun it round till the ship was headed about and again on her course.

Then, drawing a revolver from his belt, he covered the traitor, saying, "You are here to take this ship over the bar, and if she touches ground or anything else, I'll blow your d——d brains out!"

The pilot grew pale and weakly protested, "The bottom is lumpy, and the best pilot in the river cannot help touching at times."

But the little captain was inexorable: "All right, if you love the Confederacy better than your life! Take your choice. But if you touch a single lump, I'll shoot you."

The *Chickasaw* crossed the bar without striking, and the pilot disappeared the moment he was permitted.[1]

Off Mobile Bay, August 2, 1864.

I arrived here yesterday from New Orleans, and am now anchored in company with the *Manhattan*, an ironclad, and the *Winnebago*, which is the same kind of a vessel as mine. The *Chickasaw* looks just like the back of a great turtle, 257 feet long and 57 feet beam. I wish you could see her. We are about a mile and a half from Fort Morgan. The wooden

[1] Related by Admiral Belknap, *Bay State Monthly*, 1884.

vessels cannot come so near, as this is within easy range of the enemy's guns.

The Admiral visited me yesterday and inspected this ship. He has paid me a great compliment by giving me the command of her, for all the other iron-clads have old captains for their commanders. It will be a "feather in my cap" *if* I come out all right.

I have been very, very hard at work getting ready for the fight, which comes off in two days now. It is expected to be a very desperate one, though I feel no doubt but that we shall have the victory.

I am very tired and cannot write to you as I would wish; but, my dear mother, I think of you nearly all the time, and I know I have done as you would wish me to.

August 4, 1864.

The vessel is so hot that we are obliged to sleep on deck; and I am a little used up. I left a box of clothes and other things on board the *Bermuda*. Should you not get them in course of time, write for them to Captain Jerry Smith. I will also drop him a line. I ought to have about $8000 of prize-money, — four for the capture of New Orleans and four for the blockade-runner *Mary Sorley*.

I think of you all so much at home, and I love you all so much, I wish I could receive a few lines from you just before the fight. I know I shall be thinking of you and I shall not disgrace myself, no matter how hot is the fight. It seems such a long time since I heard from home; but it is too late now. O mother! mother! I wish I could put my arms around your neck and receive your blessing and good-bye once more.

The tenderness of these letters and the courage shown throughout the battle of the following day illustrate Perkins's two most striking characteristics. And who can doubt that they were closely related, or that the loving, prayerful thought of home was the best preparation for a desperate conflict?

Mobile, after the fall of New Orleans, was to the Confederates the most important port in the Gulf. Although since fairly early in the war the blockade in the Gulf had been regarded as effective, it repeatedly happened that the swift blockade-runners, creeping along the shore, would make a dash, and before the Union ships could come up with them gain the protection of the forts commanding the entrance to Mobile Bay.

These forts were, in order of their strength and importance, Morgan, Gaines, and Powell. Fort Morgan, on the east side of the main channel, was a pentagonal, bastioned work, with walls four feet eight inches thick. Mounting 86 guns, many of them of improved type, and garrisoned by 640 men, it was stronger than Forts Jackson and St. Philip combined. Fort Gaines, three miles to the northwest, and

Fort Powell, six miles farther in the same direction, while weaker, commanded passes that were navigable to vessels of light draft.

It was on the morning of August 5 that, all being ready, Farragut advanced with his fleet and fought the stern battle for the possession of Mobile Bay. Two days before, General Granger had landed with Federal troops on Dauphin Island and proceeded to the investment of Fort Gaines. Farragut had intended to advance simultaneously, but was delayed by not having his naval force complete. Besides the river monitors *Winnebago* and *Chickasaw*, he was to have two heavy seagoing monitors, the *Manhattan* and the *Tecumseh*. The latter did not arrive till the evening of August 4. At half-past five next morning, while sipping a cup of tea at the conclusion of breakfast, Farragut turned to his fleet captain and quietly said, "Well, Drayton, we might as well get under way." In a minute there came back answering signals from the expectant captains and the ships advanced to their assigned positions.

Leading the column of the fourteen wooden ships was the *Brooklyn*, and alongside of her the *Octorara;* these were lashed together, as were

also the flagship *Hartford* and the *Metacomet* coming next, and the five couples that followed. In each case a heavy vessel was to the right of a light vessel, this arrangement being used to protect the latter from the fire of the fort while passing, as well as to afford a means of carrying the exposed partner through to safety should she be disabled by the heavy guns of the enemy, as happened in one case. To the right of the *Brooklyn* and the *Octorara* and somewhat in advance, was the *Tecumseh;* in column behind her were the other monitors, which came from their anchorage behind Sand Island in the following order: the *Manhattan*, the *Winnebago*, and the *Chickasaw*. Perkins was twenty-seven years old at this time and the youngest commanding officer in the fleet.

Commander T. A. M. Craven of the *Tecumseh* opened the battle at 6.47, firing at Fort Morgan with his huge 15-inch guns — the largest guns at this time afloat. The fort soon replied, directing the shot, not on the monitors, but on the advancing *Brooklyn* and *Hartford*, which because of the narrow channel had to approach almost bows on. This kept them for many minutes under a disadvantage; they were

exposed to a raking fire, — by which a well-aimed shot might plough the length of the ship, — and until they came abreast they could bring no guns except a few bow chasers to bear in return. To offset this disadvantage the monitors, which because of their revolving turrets could fire in any position, were by Farragut's order to disconcert the gunners in the land batteries. Also the *Tecumseh* and the *Manhattan* were to look after the dread *Tennessee* and make her their especial antagonist.

Protected by armor eight and a half inches thick, the men in the *Chickasaw* were fairly safe from the shot and shell of that period. But to direct the battle through the narrow slits of the conning tower was extremely difficult, especially for a vessel coöperating with a large fleet. Perkins avoided this by standing outside the conning tower, giving orders by word of mouth. It was an exposed position, but the advantages it offered were so great as to justify the risk.

The *Chickasaw*, coming at the rear of the column, was the last of the monitors to get within striking distance. All had made the mistake of firing too soon, for their smoothbores, although sending a projectile of great size and

weight, had but a moderately short range. Craven in the *Tecumseh* was all eagerness to grapple with the *Tennessee*, and after his first fire on the fort he gave orders to load the guns with solid steel shot and 70-pound charges and hold them in readiness for a telling blow when the monitor should come to close quarters with the ram. Meanwhile the other monitors, slowly nearing the batteries of Fort Morgan, had reopened the conflict, sending in 15-inch and 11-inch shells. These had some effect when seconded by the fire of the *Brooklyn* and *Hartford;* for the leading ships were reaching a position where they could use their broadsides. The gunners in the fort, who had been in action for half an hour, were enveloped in smoke, partly from their own guns and partly from those of the fleet, the powder fumes of the latter being blown upon them by the westerly wind. Their fire had perceptibly slackened, and, as Perkins could see through the rifts in the smoke, the gunners were being driven to shelter. But suddenly all went wrong in the Union fleet.

It had been variously reported to Farragut that the Confederates had planted a triple row of torpedoes extending west from a certain red

buoy, closing all but 300 feet of the main channel immediately next to Fort Morgan. The torpedo had up to this time been a rather crude mechanism, decidedly unreliable in operation. Farragut and his officers were not greatly alarmed because of perils from this source, but that the ships might be exposed to no unnecessary risks the Admiral had given orders that both columns should pass to the east of the red buoy, that is between the end of the supposed line of torpedoes and the fort.

Craven in the *Tecumseh* was rushing forward to meet the *Tennessee*, which had come out from Fort Morgan and was steaming slowly westward. Either in his eagerness to encounter the foe, he had disregarded instructions and passing slightly to the west of the red buoy struck one of the triple line of torpedoes that had been placed there — which was Farragut's belief; or while steaming in the ship channel some distance from the dangerous line, he struck a torpedo that had got adrift — which was the unanimous opinion of the Confederate officers on the gunboat *Morgan*, lying a few hundred yards distant. There was a muffled roar, the monitor careened violently, and then settled so quickly

that 113 men out of her complement of 135, including Commander Craven, were carried down with her. The torpedo had exploded under her turret, and within two minutes nothing but eddies and a few struggling sailors marked where the large seagoing monitor had been.

The *Brooklyn*, leading the wooden ships, had been a close spectator of the disaster. A lookout reported suspicious-looking objects thought to be torpedo buoys almost under her bows. Her captain at once backed the engines, and then, undecided, stopped. Nor did he move when signaled by Farragut to advance.

The Admiral had witnessed from the rigging of the *Hartford* the sinking of the *Tecumseh*, followed by the uncertain movements of the van of his column. It was for him a moment of deep perplexity. On his starboard bow lay the *Brooklyn* and the *Octorara* athwart the channel, on his starboard beam were the *Winnebago* and the *Chickasaw*, while to the rear the column was continuing to advance; in a few minutes all would be such hopeless confusion that even retreat might be impossible. Farragut recognized just one desperate chance for victory and

resolved to take it. Backing the engines of the *Metacomet* and driving ahead those of the *Hartford*, he swung out of the column and passing to the west of the *Brooklyn* and the *Octorara* headed directly across the line of torpedoes. Men on board said they heard the primers snap, but no torpedo exploded. The other ships followed in the *Hartford's* wake and the columns straightened out as by magic. They had still the Confederate ram *Tennessee* and the gunboats *Morgan*, *Gaines*, and *Selma* to meet, but they had succeeded in entering the bay.

Meanwhile the Union monitors, so far as they were able, had been engaging Fort Morgan. The *Manhattan* could use but one of her guns, the vent of the other having been closed by rust. The *Winnebago* found it impossible to revolve her turrets, the machinery for doing so having broken down; and consequently her guns could be aimed only by altering the position of the vessel. The *Chickasaw* also presented many difficulties in operation, but her 11-inch guns were worked to their utmost speed, and she fired more shells into the fort than all the other monitors combined. According to her log [1] she

[1] *Naval War Records*, vol. xxi, pp. 786–87.

expended on Fort Morgan at this time seventy-five 5-second shells. In return, the Confederates succeeded several times in hitting her, one shell breaking through her deck and setting fire to the hammocks below. It is said that as the *Chickasaw* passed the *Hartford*, when nearly abreast of Fort Morgan, the officers of the flagship were stirred by seeing Perkins, who, far from being dismayed by the fire of the fort and the danger of torpedoes, "was on top of the turret, waving his hat and dancing about with delight and excitement." [1] The commander was, for the moment, the boy who could not suppress his exuberant spirits as he warmed up to the game.

At the time of the torpedoing of the *Tecumseh*, Perkins was in the forward turret directing a crew in sighting one of the guns. When the gunners saw the end of the strongest monitor, they were seized by panic and were about to rush from the turret; but the little captain sprang before them and threatened to shoot the first man who left his post. One weakling threw himself at his feet, exclaiming, "Let me out, Captain, let me out." A kick brought the man to his senses, and from that time there was nothing in

[1] Mahan, *Admiral Farragut*, p. 276.

the conduct of the gunners but what merited praise.

The *Chickasaw* steamed on past the fort when half the fleet had effected their entrance into the bay.[1] Already the three Confederate gunboats had fled; the *Selma* was overtaken and captured, while the *Morgan* and *Gaines* escaped to Fort Morgan, the latter vessel badly damaged and sinking. On the other hand, the *Tennessee* had tried successively to ram the *Hartford*, the *Brooklyn*, the *Richmond*, and the *Lackawanna*, as they entered the bay. Since, however, the advantage of speed lay with the Union ships they easily avoided her prow, though not escaping with like impunity from her heavy rifled shells. The *Chickasaw* seized the opportunity of firing several solid 11-inch shot at the monster as she passed to the west, and then in obedience to orders steamed slowly north in the wake of the wooden ships.

When Farragut had reached a point about four miles up the bay where the channel widened and made a large pocket, he gave the signal to anchor. Soon the men were relaxing after the intense strain and were making preparations for

[1] *Naval War Records*, vol. xxi, p. 532.

breakfast. The Union fleet had been successful in entering the bay, but as Farragut well knew they had in the uninjured *Tennessee* their most formidable enemy yet to reckon with. He was planning to force the issue by going himself that evening in the *Manhattan*, supported by the other monitors, and attacking the ram at anchor under Fort Morgan. But Admiral Buchanan, commanding the *Tennessee*, made this unnecessary; for, as the lookouts on the *Hartford* reported, at 8.45, before the rear of the Union column had come to anchor, the *Tennessee* was coming out and heading for the Union flagship.

Mess gear was hurriedly put away. The stronger wooden ships were ordered to attack "not only with their guns, but bows on at full speed." Dr. Palmer, the fleet surgeon, about to leave the *Hartford* in going his rounds, was despatched to the monitors with word that they also join in the attack. "Happy as my friend Perkins (of the *Chickasaw*) habitually is," he noted in his diary, "I thought he would turn a somersault overboard with joy when I told him, 'The Admiral wants you to go at once and fight that *Tennessee*.'" [1]

[1] Quoted by Mahan, *Admiral Farragut*, p. 285.

The Union ironclads had the same defect as their approaching enemy — they were slow and difficult to maneuver. Thus it was that the wooden *Monongahela*, which had not come to anchor, began the second engagement. She struck the *Tennessee* a blow that carried away her own iron prow, but did no perceptible harm to her foe. The *Lackawanna* followed with as little result. The *Hartford* struck but a glancing blow, for the ram had turned towards the Union flagship on her approach. As the *Hartford* scraped past, she fired seven 9-inch guns of her port broadside, but the shot bounded harmlessly off. In reply the *Tennessee* fired only one shell, but this, passing through the berth deck of the *Hartford*, killed five men and wounded eight. The further attempts at ramming were even less successful, and the *Lackawanna* by a confusion in maneuvers, instead of striking the Confederate ironclad, crashed into her own flagship and but narrowly escaped sending her to the bottom.

Meanwhile the monitors had come up and were attacking the ram. The *Manhattan* with her one available gun could not fire often, but succeeded in planting a 15-inch shot that pene-

trated the armor and woodwork of the casemates, and was held only by the netting inside. The *Winnebago* was not an idle spectator, but as her guns could be aimed only by pointing the ship her effectiveness was considerably diminished. It was the *Chickasaw* that demonstrated the power of the monitors and did more harm to the ram than did any other of the Union vessels. That there were difficulties under which the *Chickasaw* was operated has already been suggested. Before leaving the Mississippi, Perkins had reported the steering gear as "unsafe and inapplicable," [1] and now in the stress of battle it broke down; however, he succeeded in maneuvering his ship by her engines. The vessel amidships was becoming hotter and hotter. The ventilating apparatus had broken down, for when the guns had been fired over the blower hatches, the concussion burst the air conductors; the powder fumes were then carried below, fouling the air and threatening to ignite the powder that was being passed up to the turrets.[2] These troubles, however, were not betrayed in the determined and persistent attack.

[1] *Naval War Records*, vol. XXI, p. 389.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 681.

According to the log of the *Chickasaw*, when Dr. Palmer came with the Admiral's order, —

> Steam being low on account of the injuries to the smokestack by the enemy, tallow and coal tar were put into the furnaces, and we made rapidly for the ram.[1]

The *Tennessee* having been rammed several times was as a result beginning to leak. This and the increasing difficulty of keeping up steam made Buchanan fear for the safety of his vessel. Despairing of success against the Union fleet, he gave orders, after the encounter with the *Hartford*, to retreat to Fort Morgan.

But the *Chickasaw*, passing to the rear of the *Richmond*,[2] already had taken a position under the stern of the dread Confederate, and this she persistently held until the end of the battle, never more than fifty yards distant and sometimes as near as ten. Although her shot, like that of the *Hartford*, could not penetrate the armor of the ram, she kept pounding away on all the exposed equipment and on the after casemate. The effect was soon evident, and according to an impartial observer, an officer of the *Richmond*, it was a shot fired by the *Chickasaw*

[1] *Naval War Records*, vol. xxi, p. 786.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 847.

at this time that carried away the smokestack of the *Tennessee*.[1] This injury made it virtually impossible to keep up steam, and the smoke threatened to suffocate the men in the casemates.

When the *Chickasaw* had come close under the stern of the ram she hurled two solid 11-inch shot from her forward turret against the cover of the enemy's stern port. The cover resisted the blow, but was so jammed that it could not be opened to run out the gun. Admiral Buchanan, who was superintending the gun crews, at once hurried aft with a machinist to repair the cover. But the persistent monitor now brought the guns of her after turret into play. One shot struck the port cover again; this instantly killed a man engaged in removing the pivot bolt upon which the cover revolved, also mortally wounded one of the gun crew, and fractured Admiral Buchanan's leg. The admiral's wound was so serious that he had to call Commander J. D. Johnston and give the command of the ship over to him. The other gun of this turret, fired at almost the same moment, — according to the correspondent of the *New York Herald*, an eyewitness, —

[1] See log of the *Richmond*, *Naval War Records*, vol. xxi, p. 847.

carried away the wheel chains of the ram, which by a colossal error in construction lay exposed on the deck. This last injury rendered her unmanageable.

The *Tennessee* had not been rammed for some minutes by the wooden ships, because of their confusion in maneuvering for position, but she was in a desperate situation; the *Chickasaw* had continued close under her stern, firing from both turrets as rapidly as the guns could be loaded. Johnston states in his report:—

> The shot were fairly raining upon the after end of the shield, which was now so thoroughly shattered that in a few moments it would have fallen and exposed the gundeck to a raking fire of shell and grape.[1]

Realizing that a continuation of the fight meant only the sacrifice of his officers and men, Johnston lowered the flag, which during the last of the battle had been flying from the handle of a gun scraper stuck up through the grating; then coming out on the shield he hoisted the white flag in surrender. The *Chickasaw* was the nearest of the Union ships at this time, but Perkins with characteristic modesty allowed an older officer, Captain LeRoy of the *Ossipee*, to

[1] *Naval War Records*, vol. xxi, p. 580.

have the honor of receiving the formal surrender of the ram. This was shortly after ten o'clock in the morning; the engagement had lasted three hours and a quarter with a half hour's intermission. Later passing a line to the prize, the *Chickasaw* towed her slowly to the anchorage of the Union fleet.

Almost immediately, further heavy service devolved upon the *Chickasaw*, and it was not until several days later that Perkins had time to write at any length. The first letter was characterized by unusual brevity, suggesting the pressure he was under: —

U.S. Ironclad *Chickasaw*,
Mobile Bay, August 6, 1864.

Dear Mother, —
All right —
Your affectionate son,
George.

Two days later he wrote again to his mother: —

I have but a moment to write. I want to tell you I am well. We had a desperate fight on the morning of the fifth. No one was hurt on board my vessel, but the squadron lost a good many. Captain Craven of the *Tecumseh* was blown up by a torpedo just ahead of me. I will write you more about it when I have time. I had a hard fight with the Rebel ram *Ten-*

nessee, and have been highly complimented by the Admiral and other old officers for the part I took in the engagement. I have been fighting forts every day since, the other ironclads being disabled. Fort Gaines surrendered this morning. I shelled Fort Powell and during the night she blew up. Every one is in a high state of excitement. It is nothing now but fight, fight, all the time. I told you I would come out all right. I will write again in a few days.

There follows a postscript, in which the modest lad, evidently remembering how the proud parents had allowed his New Orleans battle letter to be published, especially enjoins, "Don't let any one see this for the world." The biographer can hardly be regarded, however, as betraying confidence when he repeats what is now acknowledged history. The postscript contained what Perkins knew would delight the mother heart:—

I have the credit of taking the Rebel ram *Tennessee* and wounding Admiral Buchanan. Captain Jenkins of the *Richmond* told the Admiral I ought to be promoted at once for my gallantry in this fight.

When the first news, that of the passing of Fort Morgan and the capture of the *Tennessee*, was received, it was heralded as a notable victory for the Union Navy. Yet certain English tacticians asserted, and with some show of reason, that Farragut had placed his fleet in an

untenable position. For so long as three Confederate forts controlled the approaches to Mobile Bay the fleet could not be reached by the transports and was cut off from supplies. However, no one understood better than Farragut the value of prompt action.

Four hours after the taking of the *Tennessee*, the *Chickasaw*, in obedience to the Admiral's orders, got under way and advanced on Fort Powell. In this, since the other monitors had been disabled, she acted singly. The officers and crew were almost exhausted by the strain of the morning's fight, and also by the excessive heat, gas, and smoke, below decks. Nevertheless, they continued to give a good account of themselves. Disregarding the fire of the fort, the *Chickasaw* steamed to within 350 yards of it, where lay the barge *Ingomar* loaded with shovels, pick-axes, and wheelbarrows. After seizing this, the monitor opened on the fort with 5-second shells fired at regular intervals. The fort was well provisioned, and its front face was strongly defended; but the rear, off which lay the *Chickasaw*, was less than half finished. A 7-inch Brooke gun was brought to bear on the assailant, and put a shell through her smokestack but

did no further damage. Other details may be gathered from the report of Lieutenant-Colonel Williams, C.S.A., commanding the post: —

> The ironclad's fire made it impossible to man the two guns in the rear, and I made no attempt to do so. The elevating machine of the 10-inch columbiad was broken by a fragment of shell. A shell entered one of the sally-ports, which are not traversed in the rear, passed entirely through the bombproof, and buried itself in the opposite wall. Fortunately it did not explode. The shells exploding in the face of the work displaced the sand so rapidly that I was convinced unless the ironclad was driven off it would explode my magazine and make the bombproof chambers untenable in two days at the furthest. To drive it from its position I believed impossible with my imperfect work.[1]

The *Chickasaw* continued the bombardment until night, when she withdrew. Lieutenant-Colonel Williams, fearing that his garrison would be captured with the fort if he should delay, evacuated early that evening leaving an officer to spike the guns and to explode the magazine. The fort blew up at 10.30. At 4.45 next morning the *Chickasaw* got under way and steamed to within 100 yards of the fort. It was now but a silent, smoking ruin. Calling away the gig, Perkins went to the fort and soon had

[1] *Naval War Records*, vol. xxi, p. 560.

the satisfaction of seeing the flag of the Union flying.[1]

The next point of attention was Fort Gaines on the eastern extremity of Dauphin Island, opposite Fort Morgan. The land forces under General Granger, coöperating with the fleet, had three days before landed on this island and moved up to the works. A few hours after Fort Powell had been taken, Perkins stood over to Dauphin Island that he might render assistance if needed. For an hour and more that afternoon he attempted to open communications with the land forces by signaling, but without result. Then he approached to within nearly a mile of the fort and for two hours fired 5-second and 10-second shells. The marksmanship in the *Chickasaw* again was good and many of the shells burst within the fort. Meanwhile the Confederate batteries had replied, but none of their shot struck the monitor. The next evening, negotiations were opened between the opposing forces, and early on the following morning the entire garrison of Fort Gaines, consisting of over 800 men, surrendered to the combined forces of the army and navy.

[1] *Naval War Records*, vol. xxi, p. 787.

Extracts from the log of the *Chickasaw* show how busy were the days that followed: —

August 9. — At 6.30 A.M. came to anchor off Pilot Town. At seven sent the launch ashore. Despatched the gig in chase of a boat running up the bay. At 9 A.M. gig returned with boat and three prisoners. . . . Launch returned with captured sloop.

August 13. — At 5.35 P.M. opened fire on Fort Morgan. At 6.25 ceased firing and dropped out of range and came to anchor. Expended 15 shell. At 11 P.M. hove up anchor and commenced firing 15-second shell half-hourly at Fort Morgan.

Entries in the log-book, of a like nature, are to be found up to the time of the surrender of Fort Morgan, August 23. The home letters during this period though short are too important to be passed by.

U.S. IRONCLAD *Chickasaw*,
MOBILE BAY, August 11, 1864.

It is a rainy, stormy day, and we are lying quiet about 1500 yards from Fort Morgan. The fort has not surrendered yet, but must in a short time. The army has landed in the rear, and is putting up batteries about 400 yards distant from it. We have not opened on the fort to-day, and so far not a single gun has been fired. The Rebels are all inside, and we can see each other very plainly. I do not think they the looks of the ironclads. I have no idea w the Admiral intends attacking Mobile or not. . .

The reason I am of so much importance

the other monitors cannot work their turrets. I have a very large command and of course feel very proud that so much confidence should be placed in me. I shall soon come home and see you all, and have you share my honors with me.

Four Miles below Mobile City,
August 16, 1864.

I have been hard at work since I have been in this bay, fighting almost continually. We are all nearly used up on board this vessel, mine being the only effective ironclad is obliged to be continually in motion.

I am in plain sight of the city with its defenses, ironclads, batteries, rams, etc. Yesterday I had a little fight with the rams across the obstructions. The channel to Mobile I think is entirely obstructed with spiles, sunken wrecks, torpedoes, etc. The Rebs have two very good-looking rams. I am now in the advance, but I am afraid it will be hard to clear the obstructions in the channel.

August 17.

I am now almost near enough to shell Mobile, and I have plenty of excitement. Yesterday my boats had a little fight with some guerrillas and I had two men wounded. Fort Morgan has not surrendered yet, but this does not affect us much, as we can get all our supplies through Grant's Pass.

August 18.

We are still having lively times around Fort Morgan. Last night a couple of Rebel rams came out, and we lay looking at each other all night. This

morning I expected a fight, but they went back to the city.

I have not been very well for a day or so. I have to be around all the time, day and night, and these hot ironclads use me up. I am writing now on board Captain Jouett's ship, the *Metacomet*. He is a great friend of mine, and a mighty fascinating fellow.

The surrender of Fort Morgan occurred about three weeks after Farragut had first challenged its batteries on entering the bay. General Granger, commanding the Union forces, briefly describes the incidents leading up to it: —

On the 22d, at daylight, the bombardment opened from land and water, and the fort was silent. The monitors *Chickasaw*, *Winnebago*, and *Manhattan*, of the navy, with the ironclad *Tennessee*, lay up at close range, and, with the larger vessels of the fleet outside, delivered their fire with accuracy and effect. I have already had occasion to remark the precision with which the guns upon the vessels were handled. The firing from the land was excellent, particularly that from Battery Farragut and the mortar batteries. Early on the morning of the 23d, a white flag was displayed by the fort, and under its walls I received an offer to capitulate, addressed to Rear-Admiral Farragut and myself.[1]

Perkins writes to his mother on August 24: —

Fort Morgan surrendered yesterday, and I am

[1] Loyall Farragut, *Life of Farragut*, p. 46

having a rest to-day. We were very glad of the surrender on board this ship, for all my officers and men were getting perfectly worn out from having been so constantly under fire. Now for Mobile. The Admiral is in a hurry for me to get up the bay, for, as I have said before, I am the only effective ironclad he has.

Captain Strong of the *Monongahela*, who was senior officer on the coast of Texas, has been ordered home for repairs. He complimented me by saying, "I am coming back soon and will bring you your promotion." I am so glad, mother, for your sake, that I have been so successful. I am praised and flattered by every one wherever I go. The Admiral speaks of me highly to every one. Captain Jenkins of the *Richmond*, who is one of the kindest and best of men, talks about me as enthusiastically as if he were my father, and always calls me "his pet." After the battle of Mobile Bay, he told Admiral Farragut on no account to let me go home till all the fighting here was over, for they could not get along without me.

The other day when I was sick, he sent his surgeon up, on a steamer from the lower bay, to take care of me and to bring me a lot of good things to eat. I called on him to-day, and he asked if my sisters would not thank him for making a hero of me. Perhaps I ought not to tell you all these things; but I do like to have you know of any pleasant or successful thing that happens to me. . . .

I was talking to the Admiral to-day, — he talks a great deal to me when I go to see him, — when, all at once, he fainted away. He is not very well, and is all tired out. It gave me a shock, for it shows how

exhausted he is; and his health is not very good anyway. He is a mighty fine old fellow. I want to come home just to tell you about all I have been doing. It has been so exciting that it seems as if I had a great deal to say. If I could talk instead of write, I could tell you all so much better.

For such service it seems strange to us of a later generation that Perkins did not at once gain promotion. However, we must consider the difference in times and recollect that very few naval officers in the Civil War were advanced because of distinguished service. Perhaps it makes their deeds stand out the more nobly because of their disinterestedness. A wide recognition of what Perkins had done was not lacking. The *New York Herald*, the *St. Louis Democrat*, *Harper's Magazine*, and many other journals spoke in his praise. Suffice it here to quote from the published statements of three who had a part in the battle of Mobile Bay.

W. H. Shock, Farragut's fleet engineer, wrote to James B. Eads, of St. Louis, six days after the battle: —

In the mean time the *Chickasaw* was playing around her [the *Tennessee*], endeavoring to find a weak spot if one existed. It was soon discovered that she had one, and that was the after-gun port. In

this the *Chickasaw* sent a shell, which killed part of the gun crew, and wounded Admiral Buchanan. Another disabled the steering apparatus, and up went the white flag. The Rebels did everything to shake the little *Chickasaw* off, but it was impossible; she held on with a tenacity that secured success.

Dr. E. H. Hutchins, surgeon of the *Port Royal*, wrote: —

Where praise is due it should be given. The service of the *Chickasaw*, so valuable and so indispensable, did not end here. That very afternoon, before the heat of battle had fairly subsided, she, under a heavy fire, and being struck three times, towed out a large barge from under the guns of Fort Powell. The following day she kept up a brisk fire upon Fort Gaines. Her light draft of water made her invaluable, while her invulnerable sides and her excellent steering, and her powerful armament seemed to me to render her decidedly the most effective vessel in that memorable fight. . . .

A remark of Commander Johnston — a Rebel on board the *Tennessee* at the time of her capture — occurs to me. In speaking of the *Chickasaw* in the fight he said: "If it had not been for that d——d black hulk hanging on our stern we would have got along well enough; she did us more damage than all the rest of the Federal fleet."

Of the greatest weight are the words of Admiral Farragut. In his report of the battle of Mobile Bay, he noted: —

I cannot give too much praise to Lieutenant-Commander Perkins, who, though he had orders from the department to return North, volunteered to take command of the *Chickasaw*, and did his duty nobly.[1]

Six years later the Admiral expressed appreciation that was still more enthusiastic. Less than a month before his death, when talking about the Gulf Squadron, according to the statement of a friend, Mr. McRitchie, he said:—

Perkins was young and handsome, and . . . no braver man ever trod a ship's deck; . . . his work in the *Chickasaw* did more to capture the *Tennessee* than all the guns of the fleet put together.

[1] *Naval War Records*, vol. xxi, p. 420.

CHAPTER VIII

LATER SERVICE

FOLLOWING the capture of the forts in Mobile Bay there was no leave of absence for Lieutenant-Commander Perkins, and none was desired. Till the end of the war, and later, he continued captain of the *Chickasaw*. And it was not merely in battle that he brought credit to his command. In November he wrote to the home that so treasured the words of praise: —

My vessel is the "crack" vessel of the ironclads, and the fleet captain and Admiral are very much pleased with the discipline and order she is in, and speak of her as an example.

And again: —

The Admiral talks to me a great deal about his plans, which is of course very flattering to me.

The following letters tell of life on the *Chickasaw* when summer was past: —

September 20, 1864. — It is raining and I have nothing to do. I am still alive, and looking at Mobile where just at this time great excitement prevails.

Sherman is in Montgomery and the Rebels expect him in Mobile. I for one hope he will come, for I must confess my weakness in wanting to go there. The deserters say that Forest's men behaved so badly that they are obliged to keep them out of the city. . . . Last night I sent my boat in to set fire to one of the vessels, but was unsuccessful. Yesterday afternoon they fired a few shots at us from their forts, but none hit. If they fire any more, we are going in to shell the city. . . . The Admiral is coming up in a day or two. My ship is in fine condition for a fight and I hope will make a good one when the time comes. I long for the work to begin to break the monotony.

October 20. — The last few days . . . it has been blowing a gale of wind and the sea breaks over this vessel and plays the deuce with my tent and arrangements. Besides the weather is very cold.

December 4. — I am living on deck in a tent, and these cold northers are not so very pleasant. . . . I went hunting yesterday. Killed a cow, a calf, and two ducks.

The accompanying letters written to Perkins by certain of the officers in Mobile Bay, show his intimate and happy relations with them. The first is by Lieutenant-Commander (later Rear-Admiral) James E. Jouett, commanding the *Metacomet*.

Metacomet, Off Mobile City,
October 17, 1864.

My dear little Purk, —

Shot in the neck, hey! You're a little cheat. Some

one else has stolen your heart, that's where you were shot. Well, so be it — it's all as we feel, I think.

I have the sloop astern (I'd rather have you) and will send her down in the morning — she did not arrive until six P.M. These d——d Johnnies tried the range of a rifle gun on me from that Spanish River Battery this evening. They had a good wind and I must say, the shell came a *leetle* close, say twenty yards. I am a little south of your d——d "wreck," as Gates called it. One would imagine it such from the barrels and spars flopping about it, and though I am more than half a mile from where Low lay, still they can just reach me. It's a good gun and does n't have a remarkably pleasant voice. However, you can bet when Jeemes gets a S.S.E. wind he'll disturb the quiet slumbers of some small children and nervous men and women. I'll send the *Metacomet* into that city sure. Then we'll see how they like it. . . .

Come up and enliven the scene by adding your ugly mug to this intensely stupid department. I have some chickens and gophers for you, so do come up. Bring or send up some corn meal — some corn for the chickens — and if your man Friday can find them please get some pumpkins. . . . Fetch along the bacon. Good-night, little devil. Love to Terry, Jenkins, Watson, and Co. Kick old Kirkland and send him up. . . . Write me the news and send all the papers to

Your loving old landlord,

JIM JOUETT.

The second letter is by Captain Jenkins, who, after the departure of Admiral Farragut in

November, commanded the blockading squadron off Mobile. The fondness of Captain Jenkins for Perkins has been already mentioned.

U. S. Steamship *Richmond*,
1st Division W.G. Squadron,
Mobile Bay,
December 24, 1864.

My Esteemed Young Friend, —

To-morrow will be Christmas. I hope it may be a reasonably joyous day to you and my other gallant young friends of the "Upper Fleet"; and that you all may have not only a very happy New Year, but many returns and under more pleasant auspices than the present.

I send you a bundle of the latest newspapers, telling you of Sherman, etc. And Gherardi, another one of the gallant spirits claimed among my most excellent friends, sends you and our colleague in fellowship (Captain Kirkland) each a turkey.

As these turkeys are indebted to me for passports, which I readily granted seeing they did not desire to go beyond the lines under flag of truce, my injunction is that both be not brought to the knife on the same day. Although these bipeds were bred on Rebel soil, I fancy if they receive proper attention especially in basting if roasted, as we sometimes do our friends, or well smothered up in bivalves in default of truffles or mushrooms if boiled, as managing mammas do the desirable beaux of their daughters, they may prove both savory and digestible, and they remind you too that Rebel soil has produced and can still produce other bipeds not to be wholly ignored, al[illegible]

neither our friend of the *Winnebago* is quite prepared, nor am I, for the knife and spit or to be put under the dish cover.

If you and your consort can manage to get down here by New Year's day I shall try to inveigle you both into trying the Rebel turkey Gherardi sent to me at the same time. I will try to prove to ourselves that Cotton is not the only product worthy of our consideration during war.

The *Milwaukee* will probably leave New Orleans to-day under convoy of our friend Jouett, who, by the way, will be I fear too late to catch the *Frances*, *Coquette*, *Will of the Wisp*, and others at Havana a few days since waiting for the waning moon. I shall detain him here not a moment. He is too lucky in the catching line to be baulked in his plans. Just to think of the *Frances* now in Galveston with 1,200 bales of cotton on board! If you are good at ciphering just figure out all our shares and tell Jouett when he comes. If Jouett catches many prizes I shall be attacked with that terrible disease, the Cotton Fever. It is a terrible disease no doubt and I shall fight hard against it, but I am at fault for remedies. . . .

With kindest regards to all our friends this side the Rebel lines,

I am very truly your friend,

THORNTON A. JENKINS.

CAPTAIN GEO. H. PERKINS,
Commanding *Chickasaw*.

The third letter is by Lieutenant-Commander W. A. Kirkland, who had been given the *Winnebago*. It describes in a humorous vein the duties

that devolved upon the Union officers on the conclusion of the war.

Winnebago, Mr. Bigbee's Creek,
April 17, 1865.

My dear little Perk, —

Have administered the oath to seven planters this morning, who thereby saved their poultry and truck. Am having a good time and go at daybreak to eat strawberries and cream at their houses. Shall buy a horse and send him to you to look out for till my return. . . . Tell Jones his 'n is received; he need not buy anything for me. There's lots here and they give it to me because I am polite and don't steal. . . . Two lovely women within easy rowing distance and two more that I call on at daybreak. . . .

April 18, 2 P.M. — Have just returned from the house of Mrs. Van Dorn, widow of the late Rebel general. . . . Administered the oath to three old ladies, and had a good time with the young ones. There are lots of pretty girls around here and I am getting along swimmingly for a single man. . . .

Yours in a thieving way,
W. A. K.

On July 10, 1865, the commander of the *Chickasaw* was detached and after [illegible] service in the Gulf, almost [illegible] as the war, Perkins had [illegible] home. It is easy to imagine [illegible] joy on his arrival. Miss Perkins [illegible]

enthusiasm with which he was greeted by all who knew him, adding: —

> Complimentary letters poured in on him and on his family. He was at that time the embodiment of an attractive naval officer, and might have figured in the pages of romance.

The following winter he was given command of all the ironclads stationed at New Orleans, and in May, 1866, he was ordered to New York for duty as first lieutenant of the *Lackawanna*, which was soon to leave for a three years' cruise in the Pacific.

Admiral Jenkins writes, as he was about to sail, wishing him "A pleasant and profitable cruise, and the thirty numbers to which you are entitled for your services." Advancement by thirty numbers in rank had been given in many cases for conspicuous bravery. Perkins's fellow-officers felt sure he would get at least this recognition. Some of his friends, when he was in New Hampshire on leave, had urged that he apply to the Congressmen of his State and secure their influence in gaining promotion. But this was repugnant to his feelings; he detested political intrigue or what had the least resemblance to it. Conscious of his deserts and believing that they

would be recognized, he did nothing. Unfortunately, the Government also did nothing. For this and many similar cases Farragut has been blamed. That distinguished sailor was apathetic in the urging of promotion for the officers who had contributed so largely to his own success. But whatever may have been felt, how worthy it was of Perkins, instead of becoming a party to a squabble after honors, to turn with cheerfulness and alacrity to the next duty.

The *Lackawanna* put to sea on July 8, 1866, and after touching at Rio Janeiro and Montevideo, passed through the Straits of Magellan, arriving at Valparaiso, December 17. Then she went to Honolulu, reaching it early in the following February; this was to be her station for the next two years.

The death of Perkins's brothers, Roger and Frank, at this time brought him sadness, and there follows a letter to his mother of great tenderness.

During the cruise in the Pacific, the ship visited Kauai, Maui, and others of the Hawaiian Islands, and Perkins climbed the great crater of Kilauea. While at Honolulu he took especial delight in going to the cattle ranches and tasting

the excitement of driving the wild cattle down from the mountains.

On April 25, the *Lackawanna* left for the French Frigate Shoals, where two weeks before the whaling bark *Daniel Wood* of New Bedford had been wrecked. Her captain and a part of the crew had succeeded in reaching Honolulu after a passage of 450 miles in an open boat. The *Lackawanna* sailed to rescue the others.

Of more than passing interest was the trip to the Midway Islands (Brooks Islands), a small group lying far to the west of the Hawaiian Islands and midway between America and Asia. His letters and the captain's report tell the story.

August 3, 1867. — We are now on our way to survey an island discovered by Captain Brooks a few years ago, which the Pacific Mail Steamship Company want for a coal depot, and we shall probably return to Honolulu in about six weeks. Ever since we left there the sea has been very rough, and we have been tumbling about in every imaginable way, and now the old ship is rolling so I can hardly write.

August 14. Breakers have been reported from the masthead, and I hope it is the island we are looking for. . . .

Yes, it proved to be the land we are seeking, and now we are lying at anchor off Brooks's Island,

named after the captain who discovered it a few years ago; and probably never before or since has there been anyone there. It is low and sandy, about six miles long, and its inhabitants are only seagulls and other sea birds, seals and turtles. Never having seen any human beings before, they are not in the least afraid of us, and we can catch as many of them as we wish. I have been fishing and caught a boatload of fish and eleven turtles, each one of the latter weighing 200 pounds and over. We are going to remain here and survey the islands, but to-day it has come on to rain, and we are all cooped up on board the ship — a dull prospect for me.

August 16. — Pleasant weather has come again and I have been out hunting and fishing. Shot seventeen curlew, hauled the seine, caught a boatload of fish and three large turtles; hunted for shells, but could not find any.

We are going to have a rather formal ceremony, and take possession of the islands for the United States.

Captain William Reynolds, commanding the *Lackawanna*, in his report describes this with some detail: —

I have the honor to report that on Wednesday, the 28th of August, 1867, in compliance with the orders of the Hon. Secretary of the Navy of May 28, I took formal possession of Brooks's Island [illegible] for the United States. Having previously [illegible] suitable flagstaff, I landed on that day, accom[illegible] by all the officers who could be spared fr[illegible] ship, with six boats armed and equipped, a

salute of twenty-one guns, and with three cheers, hoisted the national ensign, and called on all hands to witness the act of taking possession in the name of the United States.

The ceremony of taking possession over, the howitzers and small-arm men and marines were exercised at target firing. Having hauled the seine and procured an abundant supply of fish, the men cooked their dinner on shore, and the rest of the day was spent pleasantly, picnic fashion, upon the island. It is exceedingly gratifying to me to have been thus concerned in taking possession of the first island ever added to the dominion of the United States beyond our own shores, and I sincerely hope that this will by no means be the last of our insular annexations. I ventured to name the only harbor at this island after the present Hon. Secretary of the Navy, and to call its roadstead after the present Hon. Secretary of State (Seward).

In 1869, Congress appropriated $50,000 for deepening the entrance of this harbor; the work was begun, but the amount proved insufficient for completing the plan. One hundred miles to the west Lieutenant-Commander Sicard, of the U.S.S. *Saginaw*, who had the duty of inspecting and assisting in this work, had the misfortune to wreck his ship on a reef. The hazardous voyage of Lieutenant Talbot with three men in a small boat sailing over 1500 miles to Kauai, Hawaiian Islands, to gain succor, and the

drowning of all but one of the men just as they reached their destination and were pushing through the surf to make a landing, is one of the thrilling tales of the sea. Nothing further seems to have been done by our Government until three or four decades later, when it sought to insure safety to navigation by establishing there a lighthouse and buoys. After the visits of the *Lackawanna* and the *Saginaw*, the islands were deserted until the Pacific Commerical Cable Company placed there a station in the San Francisco–Manila Line, maintaining about forty men. This is the intermediate station between Honolulu and Guam.

After the cruise in the Pacific, Perkins was ordered to Boston, March 18, 1869, for ordnance duty at the navy yard. During the two years here, he was but a two or three hours' run from the paternal home, then at Concord, New Hampshire, and saw his people often. When his sister Susan visited her friend, Miss Anna Minot Weld, in Boston, he frequently called. She was the daughter of William Fletcher Weld, a noted financier, who beginning with little had beco one of the largest shipowners in the Uni States and later was extensively inter

railroad construction; her mother, whose maiden name was Bryant, was a cousin of the poet. She was a favorite in Boston society because of her keen wit, charm, and beauty. It was not long before Mr. Perkins found himself deeply interested, and friendship developing into love, they were married in September, 1870.

One of the happiest notes received at this time was from Rear-Admiral Bailey: —

> Your invitation is in hand. As I led you in battle and through the hostile mob at New Orleans, so I will be present and support you in the next most important event of your life.

Then began a new life for him, and after nearly fifteen years of craving he realized what it was to have a home. There was born to them some years later one child, a daughter, Isabel. While his interest and love for the home of his boyhood never lessened, the devotion he gave to his wife and daughter was absolutely unfailing; to Mrs. Perkins, who was not robust, he was the most tender and thoughtful of husbands, and in his care for little Isabel scarcely less untiring.

In January, 1871, Perkins was promoted to the rank of commander. In the following March he was given command of the storeship *Relief*,

with orders to carry supplies to France to relieve the famine and distress that had resulted from the disorders of the Communists. Six months later he returned to duty at the Boston Navy Yard, and soon afterwards became lighthouse inspector of the Second District; the latter service allowed him still to make Boston his home. He was relieved from this duty after three years by his old friend, Commander George Dewey.

Then followed a cruise in the Far East. He was ordered in 1877 to the Asiatic Station to take command of the *Ashuelot*, a paddle-wheel steamer of 786 tons, carrying six guns. Here his strong executive ability was again demonstrated, and the admiral (Thomas H. Patterson) wrote in the highest praise of the very superior discipline and order of his ship, and of the confidence which he inspired.

As this was a time of peace and friendly relations in the Far East, among Perkins's important duties were the visits of ceremony and the dinner parties — all with the end of cultivating cordial feelings with the natives and Europeans. In promoting American interests, the *Ashuelot* visited not only the well-

Hong-Kong, and Kobe, but the less frequented, Hoi-how and Pak-hoi (southwest of Canton and but newly opened to our commerce), Bankok, Foochow, Amoy, etc. The duty, while for the most part not arduous, required for its proper performance a fine sense of form as well as tact, delicacy, and good cheer. Perkins enjoyed the novelty, color, and picturesqueness, as is evident from the long letters written to the homes at Boston and Concord. He was still so young as to be interested in the prospect of a hunt, and while the *Ashuelot* was undergoing repairs at Shanghai he accepted an invitation to join in a trip on one of the luxurious houseboats, going by the rivers and canals 150 miles into the interior, where the party anchored in the vicinity of the large game to be found on the plains. The best description of his life in the East is to be gained from his letters.

CANTON, May 13, 1877.

Since I have been here my time has been taken up exchanging visits with both natives and foreigners and going to all the places of interest. Most of the foreigners in China who live at all live very handsomely. They keep up the English customs so far as the climate will allow, dining at eight in the evening, and the dinner parties and entertainments are

very rich and elaborate. The other day in Pak-hoi I went to a Chinese dinner at a Chinese gentleman's house, and there were twenty different courses, two of them being birds-nest soup and shark's fins, which are esteemed such delicacies by the Chinese. We had nothing but chopsticks to eat with.

Canton is one of the finest of the Chinese cities, and there were a great many pretty things to buy here. As one comes up the river from Hong-Kong the scenery is beautiful; it reminds one a little of some parts of the Hudson. In many places the hills are terraced and cultivated to their very summits. The manner of working in the fields here has not changed for a thousand years or more. Many agricultural customs spoken of in the Bible are in full force now among these people, and one is constantly reminded of Bible descriptions and allusions.

These Chinese are the hardest-working and most industrious people I ever saw. They live on a little rice and will work hard all day for ten cents. There are always a great many boats about my ship, pulled by women, who live in them with their children, and who usually have a little baby, which they strap on their backs and carry in that way when they have to row or do anything else. You hardly ever hear a Chinese baby cry. They have a funny custom about their babies. A child does not sit till it is four months old, but on that day the grandmother gives it a gayly-painted chair and some molasses candy; this candy is stuck to the bottom of the chair, and the child is then stuck to the candy. They think that in this way the child learns to sit quietly and will not require to be carried about in the arms. It amuses me

to watch them from the ship, where I can look down upon them and see just how they live. They are continually going through their forms of worship, keeping little sticks burning before their images, making prayers, and setting papers on fire to keep off evil spirits.

A few days ago I visited the prisons here. They keep the prisoners in pens, as you would an animal, with chains on them, until they are led out to be beheaded or tortured. There is a Temple of Horrors, where they have images representing the different Chinese ways of punishment, and frightfully cruel some of them are.

To-day I have been to see the hall of the literary examinations, where about 10,000 students have a competitive examination every three years, and as they come with their friends from all over China, it is a time of fun or feasting, like class-day at Harvard, only more so. The hall where the candidates prepare for examination is furnished with little stalls, which are not so good as those we give our cattle, and the candidates are shut in them for three days. They carry in their own food, which is to last them through, and they sleep on a shelf of boards; they are constantly and closely watched, the doors are fastened and sealed, and they are entirely separated from the outside world. This is to prevent their receiving any aid from others in preparing their essays.

In the children's schools of the Chinese the customs are just the reverse of ours. They all study out loud, and it sounds like a perfect babel; and when they recite their lessons, they stand with their backs to the teacher.

TIENTSIN, November 9, 1877.

I returned from Peking two days ago, where I have had a very interesting visit. I met our minister and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Seward, at Hong-Kong, and I promised to visit them when I took the *Ashuelot* north. This port being the nearest to Peking, I made my arrangements as soon as I arrived here to accept their invitation, and am very glad I did so, for I have had a delightful visit, and they have been very polite and kind to me.

The distance from here to Peking is eighty miles, and I went by boat. The Chinese have made this mode of traveling very luxurious, but all other ways of getting about here are uncomfortable enough. They go in rough carts, or in wheelbarrows drawn by mules, and no provision is made for travelers which deserves the name.

Peking must have been a beautiful city once; but the Government is so bad now it is fast going to decay. There was a great deal to see there, — palaces, temples, pagodas, all wonderful, and representing an amount of skill and labor to be found nowhere but in China. Among the photographs which I send you there are two of a monument to Buddha, which, in its way, is the most beautiful thing I ever saw. One of the photographs represents a section of it, and that will show you what the carving is; it is equally fine all over its surface, and it is an immense monument. They told me all the life of Buddha was portrayed on it. It is of white marble, and stands on a terrace with a pagoda at each of the four corners.

The Temple of Heaven seemed to me the finest of the temples, and that is another wonder of elaborate carving in marble. The upper part and the dome

are of blue tiles. It stands on a large platform of white marble at the top of three terraces, each one surrounded with white marble balustrades, and with marble steps, and everything very handsome. You will see in the photograph what an immense furnace is attached to this temple where a whole ox can be burned for sacrifice. In one of the temples is an idol of Buddha sixty feet high — the largest idol in the world. All the buildings, palaces, temples, etc., where the imperial family live or worship, are covered with yellow tiles, which is the imperial color.

During my whole stay in Peking I was going from one wonderful thing to another, each one worthy of long study by the curious or learned in such matters. I was shown an immense bell that weighed 100,000 pounds; it was covered outside and in with Chinese characters, and I do not see how anything so huge could have been cast, and cast at one time, and that over 200 years ago.

To show how these Chinese lavish time and labor, you will see, in the photographs I send you of the astronomical apparatus belonging to the observatory, how the standards and every part are wrought into dragons' heads and figures, and carved and ornamented. These instruments are kept on a platform on the city wall, and stand exposed to the open air. They were built about 200 years ago under the superintendence of the Jesuit missionaries, who about that time were in favor with the Chinese Emperor, and accomplished a great deal by their influence.

We went out on horseback from Peking on an excursion to the great wall. So much has been written about this that I will not undertake to describe it, just leaving it to the photographs to help you out.

They will give you some idea how impressive it is to come upon such a work as this in the midst of the roughness and wildness of Northern China. We went to the wall and out through the Nankow Pass. In the pictures I send you, you will see how the wall runs down here to a savage place between two mountains, where there are rough rocks and boulders heaped all about, as if they had rolled down in an avalanche. In a place like this, think what a surprise it is to find one's self close to an arched opening, and on looking up to see a magnificently built archway covered with elaborate carving, and crowned with two dragons supporting an image of Buddha.

Through this Pass goes all the immense trade with outlying China, with Siberia, and with Russia, and all the overland trade of Northern China, and this is all carried on beasts of burden. . . .

By the way, I find camels much used in Northern China, though it was a surprise to me to come upon them as I approached Peking. I went through the pass and had a glimpse of the great Mongolian Plain beyond, where the Tartars herd their flocks, and live in tents and wander about, just as shepherd tribes have done since the days of Abraham. I was sorry my time was so limited that I could not follow on the track of Mr. Williams — the author of one of the best books on China — who traveled all over this plain.

We found a curious arrangement for a bed in Northern China. They build a brick platform about two feet high, sometimes large enough to accommodate several persons. This is built over a funnel which passes back and forth until it ends in a sort of chimney. The fire is put at one end of the funnel,

where it comes out beneath the brick, and the fire, smoke and heated air pass back and forth, and out at the chimney, until the bricks of this queer bedstead — which is called a *kong* — become heated, and then the fire is put out, and the servant spreads the bedding — which in China a traveler always carries with him — on the warm surface.

Returning from the great wall we made a détour to see the tombs of the emperors, or "Ming Tombs," as they are called; it means the same thing. ***Ming*** is Chinese for emperor. I am very glad I have seen them. They were the most singular, the most novel, and the most imposing of anything I have seen at all, well worth making a great effort to visit. They are sixty miles north from Peking, and are situated in a long, sandy plain, encircled by an amphitheater of high mountains. There they have stood in their lonely grandeur for more than a thousand years, and their state of preservation is wonderful. It is such that it gives you that rare sensation of being suddenly dropped into another world.

From the entrance-gate to the first tomb there is an avenue of three miles. The avenue gateway consists of five marble archways, supported on pillars, whose bases are carved with lions and dragons, and whose tops support a roof worked up with that strange Chinese elaboration which I have no words to describe. This avenue is formed first by a row of white marble columns on each side; then by lines of sculptured animals of colossal size; and, lastly, by twelve gigantic statues. The lines of animals are the strangest sight, — camels, lions and winged dragons, immense creatures lying or standing on the barren plain as if petrified there. Their size and immobility

are singularly affecting. They are all cut from single blocks of granite. It is wonderful what work the Chinese do in this hard stone. They use it a great deal; and the time and patience it must require to cut and carve as they do make one tired to think of.

The great statues that finish the avenue to the inner gateway are said to be those of the emperors buried there. They are supposed to be dressed like ancient Chinese warriors. Their high square headgear is called a helmet, and something like a cuirass covers the upper part of the figure, but otherwise their garments are long and flowing, and the effect to me was not warlike, but solemn and dignified. They seemed to stand for types of the sages of old, and embodiments of the faith and philosophy of this ancient people.

At the end of the avenue is another gateway, consisting of a single arch, embellished on the upper corners with huge Chinese lions. The roadway of great flags, which leads through it, and the pathways on each side are in good order and look so fresh that it is hard to believe their date is 830 A.D. Entering this, you perceive that the great tombs are arranged in a semicircle around the valley, and that each tomb is a temple in itself. All around them is a thick growth of evergreen trees, which, though dark and solemn, softens the effect of loneliness which the great, bare plain and the high, rocky mountains give. Only the trees seemed to give a sense of companionship and take away the sense of something weird, and of another world, which was almost oppressive.

I have spoken of their size. The one that we measured was sixty-seven yards long and twenty-seven yards wide. White and red marble, porphyry,

and teak wood, all covered with sculptures, are used in the construction of the tombs. They called my attention to the pure and severe style of the architecture — different from what is usual in China, but which gives an effect of grandeur. The evergreens give a sepulchral shade, and as we stood there in one of the tombs one of their appointed guardians struck loudly on a gong. The noise rang through the halls with curious vibrations, and almost made the flesh creep. They say that the ashes of the emperors were deposited in golden coffins, and in order to keep their final resting place a secret, and secure from robbers, the grave diggers were killed.

One of the more extended cruises taken by the *Ashuelot* while at this station is outlined in Admiral Patterson's order dated October 2, 1878: —

When the vessel under your command is in all respects ready for sea, proceed with her on a cruise to the southward as far as Bangkok, visiting, on the way, Kobe, Nagasaki, Foochow, Amoy, Hong-Kong, and Manila, and, if practicable, reach Bangkok about the 20th of December next. Thence proceed to Saigon, Pak-hoi, Hoi-how, and return to Hong-Kong about the middle of February next. Regulate your stay at each place as American interests may demand.

When at Foochow inform yourself fully in regard to the recent disturbance there, and if there should be any reasonable apprehension of our citizens, or their property, inform me by telegraph and wait reply.

Do all in your power to promote American interests

at the ports visited by you, and keep me informed of your movements and anything of importance.

The letters written on his visiting the Philippines and Siam contain vivid descriptions.

At Sea, December 2, 1878.

Yesterday I left Manila, where I have been since the 6th of last month. . . . Our first days there were spent in firing salutes, and exchanging visits, and going through all the forms which are customary when a government vessel comes into a foreign port. Admiral Patterson sent me here to settle a stabbing affray on board the American barque *Masonic*, and that took up my attention at first. In the evenings I went to the opera, and visited the sights of the city. On account of earthquakes, all the buildings are but one story high. The customs, fashions, etc., are Spanish. Every one was polite and I found it very pleasant; but, as you might expect, after a little while I grew restless. I heard that there was some beautiful scenery in the interior, and I resolved to go on an investigating trip and see it. Our vice-consul, Mr. Yongs, and another gentleman went with me, and we took servants, guides, etc.

From Manila we went in a boat up a short river, which had its rise in a large lake, about twenty-five miles long, and which we crossed in a steamer. I think I never saw such quantities of two things as were on that lake — namely, ducks and mosquitoes.

From the lake we continued our journey in two-horse vehicles, like the volantes of Havana, and in these we went from village to village, on our way to the mountains. We were very well treated. The Spanish authorities at Manila provided us with

papers which commanded the chief men of the villages through which we passed to furnish us with whatever we required. The villages were clusters of thatched huts around a church, and the religion seemed to be a curious mixture of Roman Catholic Christianity and pagan superstition, as I concluded from the style of the pictures with which these churches were adorned. These were chiefly representations of hell and its torments. Devils, with the traditional tails and horns, and armed with pitchforks, were turning over sinners in lakes of burning brimstone. . . .

We found the natives very musical; they sang and played on a variety of instruments, and they were rather handsome. The women had, without exception, the longest and most luxuriant hair I ever saw in all my travels. You know it is a rare thing among us for a woman to have hair that sweeps the ground, but here the exception is the other way; nearly every woman I saw had hair between five and six feet in length.

I was told that back among the mountains there existed tribes whom the Spaniards have never been able to conquer, and no one dares to venture among them, not even the priests. Our road was constantly ascending, and as we advanced towards the interior the scenery became beautiful. Peaks of mountains rose all about us; plains and valleys stretched out, covered with tropical vegetation; picturesque villages, clustering around their churches, were visible here and there; and in the distance were glimpses of the sea, either sparkling and bright in the sun, or "deeply, darkly, beautifully blue."

I was told of a wonderful ravine among the moun-

tains that was worth seeing and I decided to visit it, especially as it was a favorable time; the river, by which it had to be approached, was then high, and its fifteen cascades, which usually had to be climbed past, dragging the canoe, were reduced to four. I took three natives with me, and we ascended successfully. I have called it a ravine, but a gorge would be a better term, for it is worn directly through the mountain by a large river, and the rock rises up on each side, as sheer and straight as if cut by machinery.

After I had ascended a certain distance, I stopped for a time to examine all the wild magnificence about me. The rocky wall on each side was so high that when I looked up I could see the stars shining in that bright noonday, as if it were night. Huge birds came flapping up the gorge far above my head; and yet they were far below the top of the mountain of rock. I do not know how many feet it rose, but I never saw any precipice where the impression of height was so effectually given — it seemed immense.

Beneath us was the deep, broad stream, looking very dark in such a twilight as such a shadow made, and I could not help feeling awestruck. But the opening of the gorge framed as smiling and cheerful a landscape as could possibly be devised, to contrast with the inner gloom. It was a wide, varied and splendid view of the country beyond, sloping to the distant sea, and all of it as aglow with light and color as sea and land could be, beneath a tropic sun.

Descending the river on our way out, I had a characteristic adventure, which will make me satisfied for a time. We had passed two of the rapids in safety, but as we approached the third, the canoe

struck on a rock, or something in the current, bow on, and swinging round, half filled with water. The natives in the end of the canoe nearest the rock sprang out and clung to the vines which hung over its sides, but the other man and I went over the fall in the half-swamped canoe, and were wholly at the mercy of the stream, with an unusually good prospect of getting a good deal more of it.

The fall once passed through, the current drove us towards the shore, if that is what you would call a precipice of rock, running straight down far below the surface of the water. I succeeded in grasping the vines, and pulling the canoe after me by my feet. The water was quiet close by the rock, and the other two men, crawling down to us, hung on with me, and bailed out the boat till it was safely afloat, and then we went down the rest of the way without accident.

JANUARY 4, 1879.

Last Wednesday we sighted Palo Obi — a small island near the coast — and passing between that and Cambodia Point, entered the Gulf of Siam, which we were two days ascending. This morning the pilot came aboard at six, and we started ahead for Bangkok, which we reached at noon. We fired a salute, and ran up the Siamese flag at the fore, and soon after anchoring the consul came off to visit us.

January 12, 1879.

I am having a very pleasant visit in this strange part of the world, and if I were younger and could shake off my homesickness I should be greatly entertained. The day after I arrived in Bangkok, the American consul — Mr. Sickles — took me, with

some of my officers, to call on the minister of state. He was very polite, and after our visit we received an invitation to be present at a "Sokan Festival," as it is called, which was held in honor of the hair-cutting of the royal princess.

It seems the hair of Siamese children is not cut till a certain age, but is worn in a knot at the top of the head, where it is fastened with gay pins and often decorated with flowers. When they are old enough, this knot of hair is cut off, and there is always some ceremony about it, even among the poorest. But this Sokan Festival was in honor of the princess of the highest rank in the kingdom, and the ceremonies were as splendid and elaborate as it was possible to make them. They last for six days, and are held in a square adjoining the royal palace. Around this square are halls and seats for spectators, according to their rank, and the square itself is covered with puppet shows, booths, and refreshment stands, where the people are regaled at the expense of the government. But what was really splendid, and perfectly dazzling to look at, was what was called the "Trailaht," which was seemingly a mountain of gold, on the top of which was a gilt temple, where the final ceremonies of this Royal Sokan Festival took place. On this mountain and about the temple were artificial trees, which were full of automatic birds, monkeys, snakes, etc., and there were pools of water full of artificial fish and there were images of people moved by machinery and on the steps of the temple stood Lukuan girls with huge wings attached to their garments, which had some machinery by which they waved them and flapped them about. All the attendants and every one in the temple had

these wings, and I was given to understand that within the precincts of the temple everything was supposed to represent heaven.

The city is crowded with people from every part of the kingdom, who have come to do honor to the occasion. Every afternoon, while the festival lasts, there is a procession around the square, which is one of the great features of the performance. This procession is barbaric and grotesque to a degree, but is also very gorgeous. The mines of this country furnish the finest precious stones in the world, and they flash upon one in great abundance, often in necklaces and bracelets strung together on the necks and arms of naked children. One of the titles of the King of Siam is "Lord of the Rubies." Portions of the procession I judged, had some national significance. It was composed of men and women, and the costumes of every province of the kingdom were represented; also Chinese and Japanese. There were besides a large number in masquerade. Then there was a military display, and the music consisted both of native music and European bands. The Second King had a very good band. Altogether the procession presented as brilliant an appearance as it is possible to imagine.

The first afternoon that I went with some of my officers to see it, we were given conspicuous seats on the line of the procession, and I was engaged intently watching the strange sight. Of course I wore my uniform, but did not expect any especial notice, having gone as a spectator. The King, in a gilded chair of state, carried by six bearers, constitutes a part of the procession, and when he arrived opposite me, I saw him give an order, and everything came to a full

stop. Then a messenger came to me and said that the King wished to see me. I followed the messenger and approached the chair, when the King said to me in a full, clear voice, and in good English, "What is your mission to this country?" I replied that my mission was a friendly one, that I had come only to express the good-will of the United States to his kingdom, etc.; to which he replied, "We are very glad to see you," and signaled for the procession to pass on. I was never more taken by surprise in my life, and felt as if I were enacting a scene in the "Arabian Nights."

Immediately after the King came the gorgeously decorated chair of the princess royal. She wore a gold crown, and was covered with gold chains and jewelry, and was attended by a group of ladies who carried the insignia of her rank on gold salvers.

After the procession had made its circuit, the King took his place in a sort of hall, on one side of the square, which was handsomely decorated and arranged for him, and then he received the princess royal, and placed her by his side. Then envoys from all parts of the kingdom, and from neighboring ones, advanced and presented her with gifts. All the noble families of the kingdom also followed this example, and this ceremony was gone through with every day.

After the royal party was seated, a sort of entertainment began. Some very pretty Siamese women — I was told they were ladies of rank — went through a slow dance before the King and princess, in which a silver tree was passed from one to the other. They were richly dressed and danced to native music.

After this, some Lakuan girls, dressed in bright

colors, with wings fastened to their shoulders, descended from the gilded temple and danced. It was all very strange and diverting for the time, and I never saw anything so showy and glittering as was the whole scene. I witnessed it several times during the festival, but it was much alike each day.

Before I go on with an account of my visiting and entertainments I will tell you something about Bangkok. It is on the Meinam Chow Phya River, stretched out about five miles, and contains about 500,000 people. These all live on the river, in floating houses built on rafts of bamboo poles and fastened to posts, except the consulates, Kings' palaces, temples, and places of that sort, which require a firm foundation on the land. All these latter buildings are tiled with green and yellow, and have an immense amount of porcelain used in their construction, with elaborate figures of gods and animals adorning them. One temple has four white porcelain elephants, more than half way up from its base, facing the four points of the compass, and this same temple is hung with little bells from the top of its spire to its base, which have fans for tongues, that catch the wind's slightest movement and ring very sweetly. The roofs of the temples turn up at every angle with a curved and pointed projection, shaped something like a horn and something like an aspiring flame. They would be very beautiful and interesting if they were only clean, but half their beauty is concealed under dirt and slime, and for this same reason all their attractions are made repulsive.

I find it very warm here, but they say the heat is nothing now compared to the summer. The morn-

ings are the pleasantest part of the day, and then Bangkok seems like a great, active city. The river is covered with boats and there are throngs of people out. The royal boats and those of the wealthy are handsomely decorated, and are a pretty sight, as they dart about on the river, with their high-pointed prows. I was surprised to find so much of the shipping belonging directly to Siamese merchants. Vessels flying the flag of the white elephant were far more plentiful than those of any other nation. It is a very showy flag, but I should think it might present a funny appearance when hoisted as a signal of distress: that is, upside-down.

On account of so many houses being on the river, some romantic individuals endeavor to dub Bangkok the "Venice of the East," but I could not get very enthusiastic over any place so slimy and muddy, and infested with reptiles and insects of every description. The mosquitoes are terrible, — no ordinary protection suffices against them. Snakes are as plentiful as frogs. The sailors have to resort to all sorts of devices to keep them out of the boats, both day and night, when we go ashore. The fireflies, though, merit all that has been said about them. Not only are they the biggest and brightest that I have seen in all my wanderings, but their nocturnal displays are a marked feature among Siamese curiosities.

Speaking of snakes, our consul told me he had tried to raise chickens in the grounds attached to the consulate, which are in the heart of the city, but could not succeed because boa-constrictors came boldly in, night and day, and carried them off.

The day after the Royal Sokan Festival closed I went to a croquet party at our consul's, and this was

a strong contrast to the gorgeousness of the day before, with its half barbaric procession, succeeded by the dances of a great number of Lakuan girls in rich, high-colored dresses, which had made the whole scene one of flashing, shifting splendor.

The croquet party was as Western as it could be made by English and American residents in so very Eastern a place as Siam. The Second King sent his band to enliven it. After the Sokan Festival, I paid a series of visits to royal personages and ministers, and to the places of interest about Bangkok.

The Siamese are polite and gentle in their manners and cordial to strangers, who are rarities. The foreign community here is only about 200. The Siamese children are beautiful, and very pretty and attractive in their ways.

I went to see the ex-regent and the ministers of war and of state. Mr. Sickles, and the King's interpreter, Mr. Alabaster, took me all over the royal palaces and temples, parts of which are very gorgeous, and all very curious. I had a good look at the famous emerald image of Buddha, which is about a foot and a half high, and said to be carved from a single emerald. The figure sits cross-legged, and is always spoken of as the "emerald idol," but it did not look any better to me than dull, green glass. It is kept in the most splendid of the temples in the King's gardens. His gardens, and those of the minister of state, are beautiful, and in what is called the "King's Lotus Garden" there are a number of temples and halls of fine architecture, according to Eastern ideas, and of exquisite workmanship. Surrounded as they are by everything rich and tropical, they fulfill one's dreams of an Oriental scene. There is a botanic gar-

den and a "zoo," both full of fine and rare specimens. I saw the stables where the King's elephants are kept, and also paid a visit to the sacred white elephants, which are only freaks of nature, and, though their skin is lighter than common elephants, it is far from white. The sight of the troop of war elephants, in all their trappings and housings of war and glittering with gold and silver, is a magnificent spectacle.

After I had paid my visits, all those whom I had called upon, including the Second King, came and returned the attention, so I had to keep up a firing of salutes and entertaining for two or three days. I also received from the Second King and other dignitaries presents of a bear, a monkey, a cat and an odd sort of necklace and some other queer things. The monkey is an immense specimen, and we are all afraid of him. The boatswain has him in charge and has dressed him in clothes, and it is a pity some of those Middle Age painters did not have him for a model to paint the devil from, for he is a terrible looking fellow and makes you think of him at once. He is always devising means to get himself free, and then he makes for my cabin, and every now and then he will get in. As monkeys are very imitative, I adopt a course of high politeness, and he proceeds to follow my example, only this does not prevent him from suddenly seizing some article and flinging it to the floor with a crash while he gives me an engaging grin. As soon as I can, I get word to the boatswain, who comes and captures him. The cat is tailless, and of singular color and shape.

Last Friday arrangements were made for me to visit the First King. Mr. Sickles went with me and

some of my officers. We arrived at the palace about four o'clock P.M., when we were met by the King's interpreter, Mr. Alabaster, who conducted us to the King's presence. We passed through a gateway guarded by soldiers, who presented arms in European fashion, and then through a passage, by the harem apartments, where we caught glimpses of dark eyes peering at us. The last hall we passed through, I noticed, was surrounded with busts and portraits of European kings. The next room was a large saloon, and here the King was waiting to receive us, which he did in a most friendly manner. He was dressed in white stockings, reaching nearly to the knee, and low shoes, Siamese trousers, and a black European frockcoat. He invited us to be seated, and cigars were passed, and then he proceeded to talk to us very pleasantly in good English, which he pronounces very carefully. He inquired if we had seen the temples, gardens and places of interest in Bangkok, and suggested anything interesting that remained for our sightseeing, and made polite inquiries. At the end of about half an hour we rose to depart, but the King asked us to remain and see some dancing by his Lakuan girls. This was the same brilliant spectacle that I have spoken of before, — the graceful girls moving about in rich, high-colored dresses and jewels, and making a dazzling picture.

The next day (Saturday) we paid a visit to the Second King. All the ceremonies of receiving us were like those of the day before, except that the surroundings were not quite so fine. This King is bright and agreeable, asked many questions, and seemed much interested about the United States. He invited us to accompany him to the cremation

of a nobleman, whose funeral pile he was to honor by applying the torch.

The place where the ceremony was to be performed was across the river, and we proceeded to it in the royal boats. Here we found the hero of the occasion, namely, the corpse, in a coffin, which rested on a bier of fireproof masonry. The bier was built in the center of a square, and the funeral was being celebrated like a festival. Soldiers were parading to music, puppet shows and showmen were performing, and everything looked very bright and gay. We ascended to a sort of veranda on one side of the square, and presently the Second King was handed a torch. By his side was a large artificial crocodile, and when he applied his torch to the tail of this animal, the fire passed through its body and was spit from its mouth, so that it struck the combustible material within the bier, and, igniting the pile, consumed the corpse. This singular firework, I was told, had some religious significance. I have found a good deal of fetich worship among the Siamese that reminds me of my old discoveries in Africa.

At a dinner with the minister of state, the entertainment lasted till about midnight, and the conversation flowed in an easy manner, as at any gentleman's table. Dinner finished, the minister showed me the women's quarters. They were below the state apartments, and we descended first to a sort of court, where a fountain was playing in the center of a large pool of water. It was surrounded by handsome columns, and so far as I could see in the dim light, was an elegant and ornamental spot. I was rather startled when a big crocodile splashed up in the water close by me. The women were asleep in latticed

compartments that reminded me of our cattle cars; there were passageways between, and the ventilation seemed good. The minister is said to be kind to his harem, which comprises about 350 women.

All the great officials returned my visits and came on board the *Ashuelot*, and I have had about all the salutes and ceremony that I can stand. The Siamese greatnesses have names that can be measured only by the yard. The King's is Prabat Somdetch Phra Paramenda Maha Ehulaloukoru. But this is beaten by that of the minister for the Northern Provinces, which is Chow Somdetch Pou Broma Wong-tee-to Chowfah Mahah Malah Krom Pra Bamrapparapak.

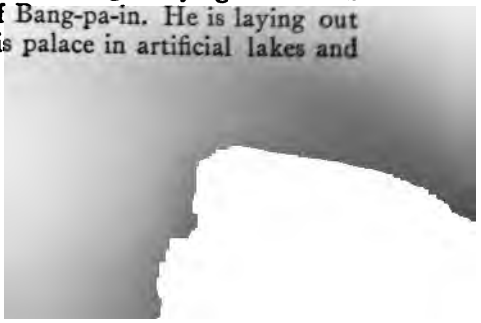
January 19, 1879.

The time has been filled since I wrote last with sight-seeing and entertainments, and I am too tired to give you much of a description. Mr. Sickles gave us a very handsome reception, and the decorations of the consulate were remarkably fine. The Second King sent his band for the occasion, and there was dancing in European fashion to European tunes. The minister of state gave us a garden party, and we sat in a beautiful pavilion and watched the Lakuan girls dance; and I dined at the British consul's and at the Portuguese.

The chief event, though, was my trip to Ayuthia, the ancient capital of Siam. It is 100 miles up the river and we went in a house-boat, towed by a steam launch, both placed at our disposal by the foreign minister. Ayuthia is ten miles beyond Bang-pa-in, which is the First King's summer residence, and where we stayed, everything being arranged

beforehand for our accommodation. Indeed, we had large and handsome quarters. From there we made an excursion to Ayuthia, of which little remains now but the temples, and those are disgusting with slime and insects and birds, and are falling into rapid decay. The idols are fallen over, and everthing is cracked and crumbling that belonged to the old city; but the elephant stockade there is an interesting thing to strangers. The elephants throughout the state are looked upon as the property of the King, and they are not allowed to be killed. At certain times of the year the wild elephants are driven into the stockade by the help of tame ones. There they are kept till subdued, the most intelligent are selected, and the rest turned loose again. They are very useful in Siam, especially in traveling through the country, and they are trained for war purposes, and a variety of uses. The King once proposed sending a number to America and turning them loose in our forests, thinking we might find them as useful here as in Siam; but the offer was declined, with thanks, by our Government.

It is rather dangerous business being about when the elephants are tamed. The stockade is immensely high and strong, and within it are huge posts to which the beasts are fastened. There is a high platform built for spectators; when the elephants are being driven in, there is no place which is very safe, but it is a most exciting scene. They tell a great many stories here about the wisdom of the elephants, and what they can be taught, but I did not have time to verify them. The King is trying to make a fine summer resort of Bang-pa-in. He is laying out the grounds about his palace in artificial lakes and



grottos, and is making use of a good many European ideas in his architecture and gardening. He is intending to build villas and a church for the use of visitors.

In the great statues of granite about the Kings' palaces and temples, and in much of the solid work done for the past Kings, I am reminded of old Chinese stonework, and have an idea the same class of workmen must have been employed. I did not stay long enough to make much of a study of Siam; but it seemed to me to be a very interesting problem.

There is an odd mixture of Western ideas, and an interest in Western matters, which is not found in other Oriental countries. They all speak English well, in what I might call the court circle, and there certainly must have been some rulers here of marked ability and of active minds. I heard much admiration expressed for the United States, and they were eager to hear about it. One of the princes is named George Washington.

The letters that follow suggest further the routine life of Commander Perkins in the Far East and describe the welcome given to General Grant as he visited China in his trip around the world.

At Sea, January 21, 1879.

I am now on my way to Saigon. Have been interested in having target practice, and in testing the speed of the ship. I took on board, for first-class boys, two of the nephews of the foreign minister, at his request. I had to return the huge monkey with which I was presented in Siam. He proved intract-

able, and was a terror to most of the seamen. I sent him back with the most polite explanations I could think of.

February 5, 1879.

We are now steaming up the Gulf of Tonquin and so along the coast to Hong-Kong. After coming down the Gulf of Siam, we rounded Cambodia Point, and went to Saigon in Cochin-China. . . .

If I thought Siam a terrible place for beasts and insects, I do not know what to say of Saigon and its surroundings. Snakes of the worst description abound, and tigers infest the country and are very bold. One carried off the lighthouse keeper the other day. . . . There is only one American resident in Saigon, and there is no trade with us; but the exports of rice are very large. . . .

It seems strange enough to steam along this coast, to stop at these populous cities, and see all this strange and teeming life, of beasts as well as human beings, all so different from each other and so fully different from what one is in the habit of considering and comprehending. It seems as if I were in a dream.

Just before coming here, we went into Touron Bay on the coast of Anam. . . . We found the inhabitants in a terrible state of destitution, owing to the failure of last year's crops. There were two vessels of war in the bay flying the Anamese flag, but they were falling to pieces; and there were two barques, one French and one English, which had brought cargoes of rice. About the bay were villages with starving people and there was no trade, and all was dilapidated and forlorn. We have been detained some-

what by unfavorable weather, but to-morrow expect to make the harbor of Pak-hoi.

February 11, 1879.

Look to the left of the Gulf of Tonquin, and you will see the island of Hainan. It is a large island, and has a million of inhabitants. I visited it when I first came out, and sent home a report about it. It is almost unknown to us, and is difficult of access. The people are hostile to strangers, and in the interior they are perfect savages and are fierce. The island was in a state of commotion owing to a feud between two powerful clans. Imperialist troops had been sent from China, but they had been well beaten, and were waiting for reinforcements. There was, of course, no trade and no shipping in the harbors, either of Pak-hoi or Hoi-how. There are five white persons at Pak-hoi and twelve at Hoi-how. The ports were open to foreign trade only about two years ago.

Hong-Kong, March 12, 1879.

My life now is such an exchange of saluting and visiting and naval ceremony that I feel tempted to give you a little journal of it.

Wednesday, February 12, we passed Green Island and arrived off the tower in Hong-Kong Harbor. We fired salutes to the port and the English and French admirals. Our salute was returned by the shore battery, the English man-of-war *Iron Duke*, and the French man-of-war *Armide*.

The next day the commanding officers of the ships of war in the harbor called on me; then the consuls from various nationalities paid me visits, which were

always recognized with a salute; then I sent an officer and began investigating the shipping and everything that came within my province to attend to, in connection with American interests. In the meantime mails, official and otherwise, were arriving, reports were to be made out, inquiries coming from the admiral, meteorological blanks to be filled up, and countless duties, naval and otherwise. Invitations came from dignitaries for various entertainments.

Monday, February 16, I went to the races, which were attended by the governor and his wife, and all the fashion of Hong-Kong. February 22, we dressed ship 'rainbow,' as it is called, in honor of the day, and as I had invited the English and French ships to participate, they also dressed ships, American ensign at the main. This was at sunrise. Then at noon we fired a salute of twenty-one guns, and so did the shore battery, and the English and French men-of-war.

February 24, the English troop-ship *Himalaya* arrived with the Twenty-fourth regiment, called the Inniskillings, which has come to relieve the Seventy-fourth. In the course of time the officers of the regiment paid me visits, and my evenings have been filled with dinners, with the different admirals and officials. Nearly every day ships of war come in. A German has just arrived from Singapore. A Japanese corvette, the *Seiki*, has also arrived lately, after an absence of a year, being the first Japanese man-of-war ever sent to Europe from Japan. Sir Thomas Wade and suite, arriving by English mail, were received with salutes, and provided with a guard of honor.

WEDNESDAY, April 30, 1879.

The French mail steamer *Irawaddy* has just come in flying the American ensign at the main, with General Grant and suite on board. . . .

His arrival was announced by a gun from the Peak, in time for most of the shipping in the harbor to dress ship, and it made a pretty sight. When the *Irawaddy* came in, all the ships dipped flags, and the mail steamer acknowledged it. Then a large party, including all the prominent American officials in China, went on board the mail steamer to receive the General. The next move was to come to the *Ashuelot.*

The Hong-Kong papers describe this visit: —

At five minutes to four the double party, consisting of General Grant and suite, and those who were calling upon him, entered the *Victoria*, and proceeded to the U.S.S. *Ashuelot.* The gallant General, on setting his foot on the deck, over which floated the Stars and Stripes, received a salute of twenty-one guns, and the national flag was run up at the fore and the yards manned. . . . The time allotted for their visit to the *Ashuelot* was three quarters of an hour. Captain Perkins then escorted his visitors on board the *Victoria*, which lying to, until the General had received the salute of departure of twenty-one guns, — the marines presenting arms, and the seamen manning the yards, — steamed slowly toward Murray Pier.

On Monday, May 5, General Grant with his party, boarding the *Ashuelot*, left Hong-Kong for

a visit to Canton and Macao. The Chinese gunboats and the river boats all seemed to know who was passing, for there was constant firing of salutes and dipping of flags. As they reached Shameen, at nine o'clock, —

There was a great display of lanterns at the consulate, and twenty war junks, anchored in line opposite, were illuminated. The Chinese gunboats were also illuminated and burned signal lights and fired rockets in answer to the *Ashuelot.*

The *Hong-Kong Press* says: —

At eight o'clock on Tuesday, salutes were exchanged by the *Ashuelot* and the Chinese gunboats, and the *Ashuelot* was kept constantly saluting throughout the morning by Chinese displays of bunting. At the consulate, the General and his party received visitors. At ten o'clock, the General and his party, and the captain and officers of the *Ashuelot,* went to pay a visit to the Viceroy at his Yamen. They went in chairs, and the party were headed by mounted mandarins and a body of troops. Traffic had been stopped, and each crossing, or end of a street, was kept by troops. This was necessary, as the pressure to get a sight of the illustrious warrior and statesman was in some places tremendous, and it was as much as the soldiers could do to keep the crowd back. The distance from the United States consulate to the Viceroy's Yamen is three miles, and the whole route was lined by Chinese, to the number of tens of thousands. General Grant said he never saw such a line of faces, and his estimate is, that at least a hundred

thousand persons saw the procession of chairs pass by. . . . The chairs were deposited inside the Yamen proper, and here 400 or 500 military and other mandarins lined the approach to the Viceroy and his suite. . . .

The party being received by the Chinese officials, the Viceroy himself led General Grant to a seat. The officials distributed themselves among the foreigners, while the party were being seated in a semicircle in the reception-room. By the side of each guest was placed, on massive tea-poys, in delicate Chinese cups, tea made *à la Chinoise*, and a lively conversation took place between the principal officials and principal visitors, which was interpreted by Mr. Chester Holcombe, *chargé d'affaires* of the United States, who had come from Peking to welcome General Grant, and by the Chinese interpreter attached to the United States consulate at Canton.

The Chinese mandarins were cordial in their manner and laid aside much restraint. They wore the different buttons of their rank, and the Viceroy had an extra batch of aides-de-camp in attendance. At the sounding of a bell, the Viceroy rose and conducted General Grant to another apartment, which was, however, so distant that it required about a five minutes' walk to reach it. The party and officials formed a procession, with due regard to precedence, and marched to a room where refreshments had been laid on a large table in a very handsome apartment. Seats had been placed for the exact number of guests, whose cards had been sent early in the morning, and when all were arranged in place, the sight presented was a very fine spectacle, as will be easily imagined, — the naval, military, and consular uniforms contrasting well with the rich dresses of

the Chinese, and the throng of at least 300 servants in fresh costumes, of different nationalities, forming the background. With the exception of the glasses and knives and forks, all the material of the table was Chinese, and consisted of the finest of that ceramic ware for which China is so celebrated. The Viceroy pledged his guests repeatedly, and seemed to enjoy his Clicquot. After about eighty dishes had been discussed, and tea had again been served, a signal was given by the Viceroy, and each guest was presented with his hat by a servant, while other servants brought lights, and cigars being handed round, the procession re-formed and returned to the reception-room, where the visitors took their leave.

Next morning the Viceroy and other officials called on General Grant at the American consulate, and in the evening the General and his party, including Commander Perkins, went again to the Viceroy's, this time to dinner, which for stately ceremony and the number of dishes could hardly be surpassed. The *Hong-Kong Press* describes the dinner with detail: —

It was getting towards dusk when the party arrived at the Yamen, and a crowd of servants were lighting up the palace. The effect of the thousand of tiny lamps, with here and there enormous lanterns, lighting the halls and rooms to the top of their vaulted ceiling, was beautiful, and a single glance brought to the mind at once whole chapters of the "Arabian Nights."

The Yamen and its premises are of great extent,

and the attendants on the high officials and the attendants on the guests, and the servants attached to the place, were so numerous that they could be numbered by hundreds. They were all dressed in silk and rich materials of various colors, which added to the brilliancy of the scene. The Viceroy and five of the highest officials received the guests, and after the ceremony of shaking hands and much kotowing was gone through with, the Viceroy led the way to a large apartment where seats were arranged in a semicircle. Here tea was served while the guests were fanned cool by a row of servants with palm-leaf fans, one of whom stood behind each seated guest. Soon after "the chimes of silver-sounding bells" announced dinner, and the party, forming a stately procession according to rank, marched slowly through several courts and corridors, crossed an illuminated garden, and ultimately reached the dining-hall.

The banquet began with sweetmeats, cakes, fruit-rolls, apricot and melon seeds, passed in little dishes; then eight courses of meats, fish and vegetables; then fruits, cakes, preserves and honey; then birds'-nest soup, roast duck, mushrooms, pigeons' eggs, shark fins and sea-crabs; then, succeeding each other, steamed cakes, ham-pie, vermicelli, baked white pigeons, stewed chickens, lotus seeds, pea-soup, ham in honey, radish cakes, date cakes, sucking pigs (served whole), French confectionery, bellies of fat fish, roast mutton, pears in honey, the soles of white pigeons' feet, wild ducks in thorn-apple jelly, egg-balls, lotus seed soup, roast chicken, fruit and vegetables, Mongolian mushrooms, sliced flag-bulbs, fried egg-plant, salted shrimps, orange tarts and cakes, prune sauce, biche-de-mer, ham with white and with red sauce,

ham combined with pumpkins and squash, almonds and beans, and so on beyond count. Cigars and pipes were constantly passed, and the Chinese showed themselves familiar with European liquors.

The bill of fare was very handsome; the representations in gold or red being emblematic of good wishes for the happiness, honors and longevity of the guest. The dinner occupied an unconscionable time. Many smoked water pipes, held by the servants who attended for the purpose, while General Grant and Mr. Borie walked about the garden between some of the courses.

After the visit to Macao the *Ashuelot*, with the General's party, returned to Hong-Kong. Here it was found that Commander Johnson, who had been appointed to relieve Commander Perkins, had arrived. Perkins lost no time in turning over his command and in embarking on the mail steamer about to leave for San Francisco.

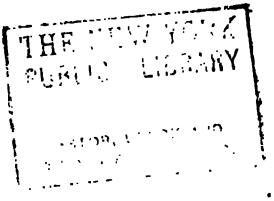
By the ordinary course of advancement Perkins became captain in March, 1882. His captain's cruise was made in 1884–85 on the historic *Hartford*. Leaving San Francisco he proceeded southward, stopping at San José de Guatemala, where some photographs were to be taken for the Smithsonian Institution. From Panama the *Hartford* went to Payata, Peru,

where Rear-Admiral Upshur, commanding the Pacific Fleet, transferred his flag to her, Perkins continuing as captain. For the promotion of American interests the fleet moved on to the south, visiting several ports of Chili and then went back to Peru. The latter republic had lately emerged from a disastrous war with Chili, and the Peruvians of the interior were refusing to recognize General Iglesias, the constitutional President.

With the small number of ships in the navy and in commission, — this was the period when the navy had sunk to the lowest point touched since the Civil War, — many of the tours of duty were very short. After about a year in the Pacific Fleet, Captain Perkins, as well as Rear-Admiral Upshur, was detached.

It was perhaps fortunate for Perkins that he was thus relieved, for although his exuberant spirits never failed, and he would seldom allow even those of his own family to suppose he was not in excellent health, there were signs, to which he had not been blind, that he must be on his guard against exposure or undue fatigue. In 1882 he had obtained a year's leave of absence, which he spent with Mrs. Perkins and Miss

CAPTAIN G. H. PERKINS, 1884


THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Isabel in Europe. Without Mrs. Perkins's knowledge of his condition, he had consulted some specialists in Germany, who told him of a slight affection of the heart, as well as some other troubles. These, though not in their opinion such as need cause immediate anxiety, were sufficiently serious so that they recommended him to undertake no more sea service. Nevertheless, he went as stated on his captain's cruise. Three years later he deemed it a matter of prudence to apply for retirement.

Thus on the 1st of October, 1891, when Perkins had served in the navy just forty years to the day, he was placed on the retired list. New Hampshire Congressmen, being convinced that there should be some recognition of his illustrious service in the Civil War, introduced a bill for his promotion to the rank of commodore on the retired list; to avoid debate and possible opposition from Congress, at times so strangely parsimonious in the payment of long-standing obligations, the provision was included that the promotion should be made without increase of pay. The bill passed, and on May 9, 1896, he became Commodore Perkins, U.S. Navy.

CHAPTER IX

THE SAILOR-FARMER

EVERY sailor is an idealist. Probably the commonest dream cheering him in the desolate waste of waters is that of the time when he is no longer roaming the seas, but has become the possessor of a well-cared-for and productive farm, where, with wife and children and innumerable pets, he will find rest and contentment. This is the sailor's Arcadia. When there comes opportunity of making this dream a reality, while there may be few, long used to the sea, who can fully adapt themselves to a life with such sweeping changes, it reveals so much that is fresh and living that it is seldom an entire failure.

The naval officer, who has the prospect of certain retirement at sixty-two, should of all men have active and serious interests outside his profession as well as in it. Further, he should have them fairly early in life; for the man who delays

identifying himself with what lies beyond his immediate circle until he is pushed out, may find the new alliances hard to form. In the latter case when on retirement he suddenly has unlimited time and opportunity to do what will yield the purest pleasure, life palls upon him. He is so bored that he sighs even for the old routine, no matter how dull it may have been. There is nothing to quicken the heart and keep the vital currents moving. With stagnation there follows mental and physical decay and death.

Farming in roughest New Hampshire had been for Perkins during the eighties a mere hobby, to which he had given attention at irregular intervals when naval duty would permit. This, during the eight years remaining to him after retirement, grew to be an absorbing interest, and, although it would not have been financially attractive to outsiders, it was of incalcuable benefit to himself and to the dozens employed by him. In this we are reminded of the English officer and writer, Captain Marryat, who in an unpublished fragment observes that a sailor on land is "but a sort of Adam — a new creature, starting into existence as it were in his

prime"; this new creature naturally takes to farming because "the greatest pleasures of man consist in imitating the Deity in his creative power." Captain Marryat was probably writing of his own experience, for in his later years he turned to agriculture and knew of its pleasures; "but," observes his biographer, "the profits otherwise did not appear."

Mention was made in the first chapter of a tiny house on a farm at Webster to which Judge Perkins and George would ride, spending the night there that they might start early next morning to fish in the "pond," a half-mile away. This in later years Perkins had visited again and again, and in its rugged surroundings found such lasting pleasure that he made it his summer home. The original house, consisting of four rooms, built around a huge chimney, was thirty feet square, and suggested the name, "The Box." Although to meet later needs the house had room after room added, together with broad porches and almost all possible comforts, this unpretentious name was retained.

"The Box" had originally but a small piece of land connected with it. Once while Perkins was making a short stay, when still on active

duty in the navy, an elderly woman came to him, asking that he buy her farm. She was tired of the lonely life with its privations. The farm was three quarters of a mile distant from "The Box" and the price asked was more than she could have got from any one else in the vicinity. Further, the land, like so much of the neighboring property, was chiefly distinguished by hill-slopes and boulders, its thin soil exhausted. It was not alluring and Perkins did not over-much want it; but he felt sorry for the woman and promptly accepted her offer. It now occurred to him that it was unfortunate and quite unnecessary that his new possession and similar places should pass into the senile class known as "abandoned farms." He resolved to renew the soil and make it productive. Thus it was that the naval officer seriously gave his thoughts to farming.

He purchased other places near by. He engaged a young man of experience for superintendent, Mr. Milton J. Walker, a choice that proved to be unusually fortunate.

From this time on he would spend four or more months a year at Webster, and would run up for an occasional short stay during the

winter. Mrs. Perkins says he would exclaim on again coming to the much loved hill on which "The Box" stood, "Oh, is n't it good to breathe this air and to think that no one has ever breathed it before!" The view, as one stands just to the east of the house, is one of the loveliest in southern New Hampshire. Hills and mountains rise in all directions, with an occasional farm nestled among them, the light-green meadows giving brightness to the scene, and the bit of cultivation affording a pleasing contrast to the roughness of the surroundings. Eight or ten miles distant above a well-cultivated hill loom the massive shoulders of Mount Kearsarge, shaggy with heavy woods, and varying from a light purple to a black according to atmospheric conditions. To its right and farther distant are the Ragged Mountains, also wooded, their rough sides well outlined against the sky. An important part of the scene is what lies in the same direction as the Ragged Mountains but in the foreground; beyond the grassy, gently rounded slope of Box Hill, and the half-mile of bristling pines, is a sparkling lake two miles long and a half-mile wide, set like a jewel among the pine, beech, birch, and oak. Commodore

Perkins purchased much of the land surrounding the lake and was able to prevent the cutting of the timber. The farm, where Mr. Walker had his home, lay on the near end of the lake, but not where it could be seen from the hill. The lake was earlier known by that most unromantic name, so common in old New England, "Long Pond," but this was later changed. The Commodore's friend, Professor Charles Sargent, of Harvard, had boasted of the superiority of a lake on his land because it had an Indian name. The Commodore grieved that he must let the challenge pass unnoticed, whereupon Miss Susan, ever sympathetic and resourceful, proposed the name "Winnepocket." This at once pleased the Commodore and hereafter was substituted for Long Pond, not only in "The Box" household but on the State maps.

Farming for the Commodore was like a game. He had no desire to buy well-cared-for farms near Concord or Contoocook, which any man could make productive. His interest was rather in taking the wild or neglected lands, regarded as worthless, and making good farms of them. The excitement of the game lay in suc-

ceeding where others had failed or feared to venture.

This is shown by an instance on the Burpee farm, which he had purchased. Mr. Walker had called attention to a large tract there, which, in his opinion, when drained and cleared would make excellent meadow land. There was work and expense involved, but the Commodore told him to try it.

One morning when the Commodore had ridden out to inspect the work, a neighboring farmer passed.

"What are you doing there?" was the latter's query.

The words and the voice had in them a challenge, but the Commodore with excellent spirit explained the project.

"You'll never make anything out of that soil," volunteered the scoffer. "But you might as well sink your money there as anywhere else. If you get good English hay out of that bog, you may use my head for a football."

The Commodore had kept up a bold front while the scoffer was talking, but when the latter departed, it was evident that his confidence had been somewhat shaken. Mr. Walker, how-

ever, held that the project was sound. Whereupon the Commodore again told him to go ahead.

Three years later the Commodore and Mr. Walker went to see the hay cut on the tract that had been reclaimed. Walker's judgment had been correct, and the crop was extraordinarily heavy. As chance would have it the scoffing farmer came along and joined them.

"Don't you call this good hay?" incidentally inquired Walker, moving towards some not yet cut, which came as high as his waist, and was easily three times as thick as the average crop in that vicinity.

The farmer affirmed with positiveness that it was.

"Do you remember promising that when we grew good English hay in this bog we might use your head for a football?"

The Commodore, who had recollected the earlier conversation, listened with delight, rubbing his palms vigorously together, a habit of his when excited. In the game the novices had defeated the veteran. His satisfaction over the achievement lasted all summer.

Farm after farm was now added, the number

eventually reaching sixteen, comprising 1800 acres. The Commodore seemed to have no desire that the land should be continuous and form a great domain; indeed, some of the farms were three or four miles distant.

He was still in spirit and method the naval officer, the captain; though he gave full power to the one corresponding to the executive officer, Mr. Walker, he must have detailed reports, and himself make daily inspections if possible. When at "The Box" he knew what each man was doing and showed no small ability in keeping every one at work. He would produce from his pocket a list of instructions for Mr. Walker, nor did he forget what he had told him. The precision and regularity of ship life he never outgrew. If he had arranged to start for Concord at six in the morning, he wanted to leave at six, no matter what the weather might be. Commonly at nine he would be in the saddle, about to make the rounds of the farms in one direction, say to the east, and in the afternoon he would go to the farms to the west. At times Mr. Walker was with him, or he might be accompanied by his daughter Isabel, his nephew Roger Foster, or a guest staying at "The Box," for companion-

COMMODORE G. H. PERKINS
From the painting by Vinton

THE NEW
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ship adds zest to a game. Even the small incidents of farming had a constant interest for him. He would stand by as in the wet spring Walker would drive out a huge load of dressing, skillfully managing a team of four horses in a barnyard where there were several sharp turns and some spots rather miry. He delighted in the skill thus shown, and again his palms rubbed together expressing his satisfaction.

Following his naval ideas he expected that all his employees should give unhesitating obedience, and finish the work that had been begun with the utmost expedition. The men had hardly been accustomed to this and they could not easily adapt themselves to the new régime. Also he required that whenever a group of men were working together some one should be in command; commonly this person was but a temporary foreman who would also do his full share of the task, but upon him rested the responsibility for the work's being properly done. The rule was strictly applied whether there were twelve or two men at a task. This bit of naval organization was decidedly strange to democratic New Hampshire, where everybody is in theory the equal of everybody else, and

being often an extreme individualist, likes to work each in his own way. The Commodore's system was unpopular, for the men thought at first that it threatened their independence. "The spirit of '76" was invoked by more than one, but fortunately the wiser men came to understand the new method and averted the possible war.

The Commodore's delight in a contest showed itself as he put two gangs at the same task, either within sight of each other or on different farms. He would compare results and grill the slower gang, or quite as likely both of them. They soon learned to recognize his humor, and make spirited replies, which would draw from him a chuckle as he left. It must be admitted, however, that the Commodore was at times unreasonable in his demand for quick results. He seemed to have forgotten that he was not still on shipboard where the number of men who may be applied to a piece of work is to be counted by hundreds instead of tens, and where the ordinary operations can be both begun and finished in a day. Thus when he was still very new at farming, he grew excited and seemingly angry because, with the prospect of rain the

following day, ten acres of hay cut in the morning should not be in the barn that night. His words were rather sharp, and the answer they called forth was uncompromising and plain, almost to the point of bluntness. Whereupon the little petulance vanished in a moment, and the Commodore began laughing over an incident of the day before, a chase the broncos Sandy and Dago had given him when they escaped with saddle and bridle plunging into the depths of a thicket.

The Commodore's whim of making a place look shipshape occasionally caused trouble. When he had purchased and begun work on a farm, he wanted at once to clear it of stones and brush. After the brush had been cut and gathered in a pile, he had the greatest liking for setting it on fire and thus completing the work. As there was danger that a fire started in this way during a dry season might get from under control and rushing through the underbrush and woods do great damage, the superintendent often had reason to watch with anxiety the movements of his chief. An incident of this kind occurred on the Dudley farm to the east, where, in clearing, the men had collected an immense

pile of brush. One morning when the superintendent was working on the Highland farm to the northwest he noticed smoke and he guessed what it meant even before he saw Miss Isabel, then fourteen years old, come tearing along on her pony; she had come from the other farm, four miles distant up hill and down, all the way at a white heat. "The Dudley place is all on fire," she exclaimed. "Father says get all the men you can and come at once." The forces had soon joined, and for the rest of the day were fighting fire, the Commodore taking an active part. The adventure may have satisfied for a while his passion for brush-burning; but hereafter when he was known to be near, a brush pile was never left without a trench being ploughed around the field.

In the first chapter mention was made of Perkins's early love for horses. In later life nothing connected with farming gave him greater pleasure. Before he had retired from the navy, he had purchased Montrose, a stallion that showed speed. This in 1894 made his best time, which was 2.26½. In 1895, Thetis, a bay mare raised on his farm, took the track and won the prize — a trotting sulky — offered

by Mr. John B. Clarke for the fastest horse raised in New Hampshire. Her record at that time was 2.16¼; later she made 2.14¼. Once on a mere trial heat she bettered her record by six seconds. Another of his horses, Maple Valley, a gelding, trotted a mile in 2.8½, his official time being 2.12½. Thetis and Maple Valley made a superb team and were the Commodore's favorite horses. The Commodore did not game on the results of the race track, but his horses were an expensive luxury. However, the pleasure of driving a beautiful team and the proud satisfaction of having raised the fastest horse were such as have no relation to dollars.

In raising cattle and sheep he was more practical. When his nephew Roger Foster, who was with him a great deal on the farm, seconded by Mr. Walker, urged that this kind of stock-raising should be tried and pointed to the possible profits, he gave his consent, but insisted that they should keep a strict account and be able to show a gain. In his last year the Commodore had on his several farms 60 horses, 110 cattle, and 350 sheep.

The Commodore had seen many a good horse

needlessly lost because of ill-treatment or some slight ailment, and it became one of his many interests to take such animals and with the help of a young veterinarian make good horses of them. Thus he made several purchases from the farmers roundabout of broken-down horses that looked promising, giving whatever was a fair price. While he failed in some cases, he succeeded in enough others so that he lost no money. It was another of his games in farming, trying to do what the other men could not do.

A capital instance of this, even though it ended in failure, was that of a horse offered him by Mark Ellenwood, a well-known character of an adjoining town.

Mr. Roger Foster returned one day with news that Mark had a horse, weighing 1400 pounds, apparently sound in every particular, which he would sell for $50. The price, of course, aroused suspicion, and the question immediately asked was, what was wrong with him. Roger replied by repeating his first statement that apparently he was sound in every respect, and added that Mark had suggested they take the horse and try him for a few days. The proposal looked

harmless, and the Commodore told Roger to go and get the horse. Accordingly next morning Roger appeared at the Winnepocket farm with Prince, the new horse.

The Commodore subjected him to a sharp scrutiny. "Splendid-looking animal," was his opinion, and turning to Walker asked what he thought of him.

Mr. Walker, not easily carried away by enthusiasm and true to the New England tradition of thinking before speaking, examined the horse without a word. Finally he scratched his head, "I declare, I can't see anything the matter with him. Really a good-looking animal — no bunches, not a pimple on his body. I see he is n't shod behind. I wonder what is the reason of that."

"O, I don't know," said Roger, "except that they have n't been using him for a while. Let's have him shod and try him. This looks to me like great luck."

"All right," replied Walker, "we'll go ahead and try him"; adding, however, with some obstinacy, "you'll find something is the matter. He'd be worth $50, and four times $50, if there was n't something wrong."

Walker suspected that they would find the animal did not pull, and after shoeing him proceeded to put him to the test. Hitching him to the trunk of an old apple tree, he began with, "Get up, Prince." The horse started up, but, of course, without result; then gathering himself together and using his entire weight gave such a long and determined pull that the traces strained and the tree trembled.

Now a horse with little spirit will never pull twice on a thing that does not yield. There was no question but that Prince had pulled, and Walker was discredited by his own theory. He was puzzled, and admitted it. "I can't see anything the matter with him. He is a magnificent horse. Let's hitch him to the drag with the large bay mare and haul away some of the boulders in the pasture."

Prince started off and all went beautifully until he began to kick. A touch of the whip had no effect. Kick, kick, kick! He kicked the drag, he kicked the harness off, and finally he kicked himself free from the other horse — to the great relief of Roger Foster and Walker, for they had feared the bay mare would be killed. That was sufficient; they understood why the price

was low, and they decided to take Prince to the stable.

At this moment the Commodore, who had been away, reappeared. "Let's see the new horse. Splendid-looking animal! How does he go?"

The story of the recent performance only amused him. "O, pshaw, Walker, you don't know anything about driving horses. Hitch up Prince and let some of the horse-boys drive him. Here, Mike, go up the hill with this horse and bring down a load of hay. D——d fine-looking horse! You don't know how to manage a horse, Walker, or you'd be able to drive him."

Prince went up the hill all right, as Mike afterwards related, and on being hitched to the hay-cart drew it with the greatest ease until he got over the brow of the hill and the load pressed on him from behind. Then he began to kick. There was nothing to resist his blows except the soft hay and an occasional slat. Prince seemed surprised, but still he kept on. Kick, kick, kick! Finally he kicked himself loose, and with the remnants of the harness bunched around his shoulders he stalked down the hill and to the barn, Mike following at a respectful distance.

The Commodore, who had become impatient at the delay, was nevertheless in position to review the solemn procession as it passed. "Where's the load of hay, Mike, I sent you for? Don't any of you know how to drive a horse? D——d good-looking animal!"

Mark Ellenwood, the owner of the horse, it seems, had intended to see this fun. Knowing that the Commodore was having work done at the Oakland farm, which was three miles nearer his own place, he had supposed that as a matter of course Roger Foster would take him there to try him. And he had dropped his work, and going to the Oakland farm, had lain in ambush a good part of the morning, waiting in vain for one of Prince's inimitable performances.

The determined Commodore, however, was not ready to admit that the case of Prince was beyond hope. He still had a man in reserve, a horse-trainer by the name of Brown, who, in the interests of his employer, one of the best-known horse-dealers in Boston, chanced that day to be at Webster.

Brown promised to try his luck that afternoon, and every man who was not positively held by duties elsewhere found it convenient to

be near. It is said that a horse at once feels the touch of the master. Brown seemed certainly to know just what was to be done, and how to do it. He hitched Prince singly in a wagon. He occasionally spoke in a low voice to the horse and patted him. The deftness of his movements and the confidence in his manner awakened admiration of the spectators. All was anticipation. Prince took two steps; then something irritated him and he forgot about the master. Kick, kick! One shaft was broken. Next he lay down and broke the other, all the while, even when down and on his side, continuing to kick. Finally he got so thoroughly wound up in the tangled harness that he could not move his legs more.

"We've stopped him kicking for once," observed the Commodore with a chuckle that caused even the discomfited Brown to join in the general laugh. "That's a small morsel of consolation. But see the spirit in his eye. D——d fine animal. I hate to give him up merely because we can't manage him. But I guess, Roger, you'd better take him back. And be sure to thank Mark for letting us try him."

The Commodore, as in earlier years, took a

keen interest in the pets about the house. Jimmy and Foxy (fox terriers) and Tony (a bull terrier) made a great team, and collectively would not refuse battle with the biggest dog in the neighborhood. On the roads through the woods they afforded unfailing interest. Once they treed a wild cat, and they had many a fierce battle with the large woodchucks overtaken away from their holes. These excitements the Commodore would enjoy like a small boy.

Tony was also the name of a parrot, a present of Admiral Farquhar as he returned from a cruise on the *Trenton*. Mrs. Perkins relates that one day, while the family were standing near, Tony flew to a thicket not far distant. The Commodore, Miss Isabel, and four or five others went at once in search, but could not find him. Night was approaching. The Commodore offered a substantial reward and sent out the farm hands, but with no success. During the night there was a heavy thunderstorm. Mrs. Perkins woke up to find the Commodore pacing the floor and rubbing the palms of his hands in keen distress. "I can't sleep. Poor Tony is out in the storm," was his remark. Three days later, when all hope for Tony had been abandoned, a

neighbor brought him in. The farmer, on passing through a lonely wood in the dusk of the evening, had been startled by hearing a strange unearthly voice speaking from empty space, "Call the dogs," following the words with maniacal laughter. The man, not being accustomed to act on impulse, waited a moment before running and discovered the speaker. He rescued the parrot and was bitten for his pains.

The stories of Commodore Perkins's kindness to the poor people of Webster and to many a stranded seaman of Boston are innumerable. At the beginning, the people of Webster did not understand him. They had a prejudice against him because he had money and spent only a third of the year at Webster; and a few thought he was rough and autocratic. Gradually, however, these feelings changed. James Powers, a man of shrewdness and discernment, who knew him long and intimately as his horse-trainer, tells of riding with the Commodore when he was making the rounds of the farms.

"I've too many men," said the Commodore. "I am going to lay off half of them."

Powers knew that from the standpoint of practical farming the Commodore was right.

But he also knew that the Commodore would never lay them off unless they had other work. Later, while driving through the village of Webster, they saw half a dozen men lounging before the store.

"Do you need any more help?" was their inquiry. "We've got in our hay and should be glad to work for you."

"I don't know what there is to do, but perhaps there may be some land to be cleared," replied the Commodore. "Anyway, report early to-morrow morning to Mr. Walker at the Winnepocket farm; he will have some work for you."

He believed in giving every man a chance. In an abjectly poor young man who had fits, the Commodore became actively interested, and just as he worked over sick horses he had a physician take up the case that he might reclaim the youth and make of him a well and useful citizen. He would even send the unemployed up from Boston, not infrequently embarrassing Miss Susan, to whom when absent he intrusted many of his affairs. His touchstone was, "Does the man lie, does he steal? If he does n't, there's hope for him."

A New Hampshire lad of seventeen in his employ raised a pay check from $18 to $81. The check was paid by the bank, but the fraud was detected later when the account would not balance. The lad had been led to the wrongdoing by bad companions, and not being experienced in vice, broke down on being questioned and confessed. Commodore Perkins was now inclined to drop the matter, but the bank officials regarded the offense as serious and demanded a penalty that should stand as a warning to other weak youths. As a result the lad was sent to jail for one year. The Commodore visited him during his confinement, encouraging him to fix his mind on the time when he should again be free. He promised him employment, and true to his word sought the lad immediately on his release and brought him to the farm. As long as the Commodore lived, the young man continued in his employ, scrupulously honest and fully deserving of respect.

Dorcas E—— was an elderly woman, untidy in appearance and decidedly eccentric, who lived with a sister and invalid brother, next to the Highland farm. The Commodore knew her but slightly, but had in little ways been kind to

her. One evening she came to "The Box" and excitedly asked to see him. The family happened to be at dinner, which Mrs. Perkins always made a rather formal occasion. The Commodore, however, having heard the request to see him, came out before the message was brought. Pat McNamara, who had charge of the stable, describes what followed as the worst "tongue-lashing" he ever listened to. The burden of Dorcas's grievance proved to be the actions of one of the Commodore's colts, which had inconsiderately jumped over the stone wall separating the two farms. Inspired by this she let forth a torrent of denunciation that promised to sweep away the Commodore and every other man who, just because he wore a little better clothes than his neighbors, put on airs and let his horses run all over their farms. The Commodore listened with the utmost respect, and after expressing his deep regret directed Pat at once to go up to Dorcas's and repair all damages. Next day there was a twinkle in his eye, when in making the rounds of the farms he stopped at Dorcas's and solicitously inquired after her health. A few days later he left a substantial present for her, some much-needed clothing,

and from that time on he kept a watchful eye out for her welfare, making her frequent presents. It is no wonder that the people of Webster commonly addressed him as George, and quite forgetting their prejudices looked forward eagerly, when he had been away several months, to his return.

The Commodore had little knowledge of politics and less inclination to meddle in them. He was led, however, to make an inquiry because of his desire to help Mr. Roger Foster to a seat in the State Legislature. There is a delightful simplicity, as the story is told, in his seeking advice as to whether he should join the Republican or the Democratic party. Not long after this he was approached by a group of men of some prominence who proposed to boom him for Governor. No one could help being flattered by such a suggestion, but the Commodore, on talking it over confidentially with a member of the Legislature, a shrewd farmer, remarked as he finished, "I don't think I want anything of it. They would like to make me a figurehead so that they could do whatever they pleased. However, if they got me elected they would change their minds."

Commonly the Perki[illegible] would go to "The Box" about [illegible] of May, which was often before the [illegible] was up in Time-pocket, and after a [illegible] of two months or more at Newport [illegible] came their stay at Webster, remaining [illegible] the last of October or November. The [illegible] one was in Boston at 123 Commonweal[illegible]ve. Here the Commodore established a daily routine that he adhered to with military faithfulness. In the morning after breakfast he attended to correspondence, perused the newspaper, and was likely to follow it with something substantial in reading, for his taste was especially for memoirs, biography, and history. After lunch he might spend two hours at one of the clubs of which he was a member, Somerset, Union, or Country,—and at three o'clock go for a drive. In driving it might be Miss Isabel who was with him; frequently it was Professor Charles S. Sargent, of Harvard (who in the Civil War had also seen service at New Orleans and Mobile Bay, and it was there that their friendship had begun); or it might be Admiral Luce, Admiral Belknap, or any one of a score of friends.

Mr. James Powers tells a characteristic inci-

dent of one of these drives. "Whip up the horses," said the Commodore; "there's an old sailor ahead and I know he'll want something of me." When they had caught up with the dangerous man, however, the Commodore gave word to stop, and with a few swift questions inquired into the sailor's welfare, doing it with a passing jest that made the old salt's face brighten, in spite of the hard luck that had been dogging him for some weeks. Before the Commodore had left him he slipped a five-dollar note into his hand. "Take this and without uttering a word promise that you'll be grateful all the rest of your life. Now don't you speak a single word or I'll have you put in irons. Goodbye."

The Commodore would bring his best horses up from "The Box," and there was nothing he showed keener relish for than a little trial of speed when the snow had come and several of his friends appeared with their sleighs. In Thetis, Maple Valley, Myopia, Diversion, and Blazeaway, he had what would be the joy of any lover of horses. He would return from his driving all aglow and relate with boyish glee how he had left this or that rival behind.

The Perkins family, even before the Commodore's retirement, spent their summers in Newport, occupying the De Rham Cottage. The Commodore became a favorite at the clubs and in the homes because, as Professor Sargent says, "He had wonderful geniality and could put everybody into good humor." He was much sought after, but he went out comparatively little, for both he and Mrs. Perkins preferred the quiet of their own home to a constant round of social gayety. His life had almost as much regularity as in Boston. Driving was still his chief recreation, and it is said that he had the finest horses at Newport. This brought him no small satisfaction. However, he often longed for Webster and its simple life. During the years when he went for the summer to Newport, he would pass the spring and autumn at "The Box"; also he would run up for brief stays at frequent intervals during the months between. The hills of New Hampshire were his first love and he never forgot them.

In Miss Isabel the Commodore had ever a good comrade. She inherited his love for horses and all outdoor life. Further, they were such good chums that she shared with him the happy little

incidents connected with her girl friends. He took great interest in the unfolding of womanhood, and was still the devoted father after her marriage in 1897 to Mr. Larz Anderson. Mr. Anderson, the son of General Nicholas Anderson, of Cincinnati, served during the Spanish-American War in the Second Army Corps with the rank of captain. Previously he had spent several years in the diplomatic service, and in President Taft's administration he was made minister to Belgium and later ambassador to Japan.

Commodore Perkins had also offered his services to the Government at the beginning of the Spanish-American War, but the department adhered to its general policy of not calling the retired officers back to active duty. It is easy to imagine the eager interest with which Perkins read of the exploits at Manila of his old Academy mate and fellow-fighter at New Orleans, Commodore George Dewey. It is also easy to imagine the feeling of sadness as he thought that he was, so far as the navy was concerned, superannuated — the heaviest cross that an active spirit has to bear.

There comes now, in this narrative of a brave

life, the final conflict, when without weakness and without fear he completed his earthly career. His death occurred on October 28, 1899. A fortnight previous, October 14, he had been at a brilliant banquet tendered to Admiral Dewey by the Algonquin Club, where he was one of the merriest of the many distinguished guests; at the instance of Admiral Dewey he had made a speech, Governor Wolcott and the Admiral making the only other speeches.

The end came fortunately without a long illness. He was at his home in Boston, and on Wednesday afternoon went for his customary drive, taking Colonel Schuyler Crosby with him. Suddenly his hold of the reins loosened, his head sank, and he began to breathe heavily. Colonel Crosby took him home and summoned Mr. and Mrs. Larz Anderson, who were about to leave town. The Commodore's illness was due to a valvular affection of the heart. His intense suffering was relieved by an anæsthetic, and when he roused on the following day he seemed better so that some hope was entertained for his recovery. However, he recognized that his condition was very serious, and again and again asked the doctor how his pulse

was. The evasive answers did not satisfy him, and with something of his old-time spirit he rejoined, "Doctors and horse jockies are all the same. You can't believe anything they say." He talked cheerfully with Mrs. Perkins, who was constantly with him, and made evident effort that his illness should not wear on her. When Mrs. Anderson entered the room he would give her a smile of welcome, and stretch out his hand, but after she had sat for a few minutes beside him he would say, "Baby dear, you must n't stay up here with me, you'll get tired." And then he would look satisfied and grateful as she kissed him and assured him that she loved to stay with him. Among his last words were those to Colonel Crosby, "Well, old fellow, I think I've furled my sails for the last time." The old weather-beaten ship was creeping back into the home port.

The funeral was military in character, and took place on Tuesday, October 31, at the Arlington Street Church. The pall-bearers were Mr. William Bliss, Admiral Stephen D. Luce, Admiral George E. Belknap, General John C. Palfrey, Colonel Stephen M. Weld, Colonel Schuyler Crosby, Mr. Thomas H. Perkins,

Professor Charles S. Sargent, Mr. Francis Bartlett, Mr. Samuel Hoar, Mr. Edward D. Hayden, and Mr. Charles A. Williams. His remains were interred in the Forest Hills Cemetery, Boston, and the grave was marked by a large boulder taken from the farm at Webster.

CHAPTER X

THE MEASURE OF THE MAN

IT is hard to weigh with a calm and unprejudiced mind the value of a life which one has long followed with devoted interest. The author feels this, although it was his fortune to know Commodore Perkins, not by personal contact, but through the words of those who were nearest to him and through his home letters, unusually complete and well preserved. It has been wellnigh impossible in the foregoing pages to speak of his naval service without the greatest enthusiasm, yet it must be admitted that this service in magnitude had of necessity its limitations. During the Civil War important duty was assigned largely according to seniority, and Perkins's youthfulness thus prevented his being given a command of much greater distinction. The significant fact is that whatever duty was assigned to him he did well, and especially in the critical moments of action his service was not less than brilliant. While he was only one factor in the great forces that brought victory at

New Orleans and Mobile Bay, had he failed the effect on the result could hardly have been other than disastrous.

His personality was ever engaging, but nowhere else were the winsome qualities shown with such unfailing clearness and strength as in the home. His devotion to his mother and to his sister Susan, who never married, to his brothers during their boyhood, to his wife, and to his daughter, has a quality that cannot fail to touch the heart. This is constantly appearing in his letters, certain of them having the love and the spiritual nature of prayer. To casual acquaintances Commodore Perkins was neither religious nor irreligious. But home ever had for him an altar at which he worshiped.

Another element in his engaging personality was his unfailing good humor. It was an overflow of good spirit that gave many the impression of health, perfect and constant. His geniality was contagious. His flashing gray eye commanded attention, and it betrayed the mirth lurking in its depths. Miss Perkins says his eye was like their mother's, and to its magnetism attributes in large part "his great power over all animals: fast horses, a boatload of sail-

U.S.S. PERKINS

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

ors, or a roomful of ladies." He was a great mimic without the slightest elocutionary touch. He would often say just the opposite of what he meant, with a boy's spirit of play, but after drawing out a quick and indignant reply, with his chuckle and laugh he would put all to rights. There never was cruelty in his fun. His strong underlying sympathy prevented that. He was the friend of all, no matter what was their station; this friendliness, though he was not one to talk about it, they felt and appreciatēd.

His charm lay further in his versatility and constant activity. Even at Aspinwall (Colon) or on the African coast, where duty for so many officers was scarcely less than a living death, he found constant diversion. There was no stagnation when he was near. On retirement from the navy — when so many officers lapse into innocuous desuetude — he turned his attention to farming and became a center of activity. He tried farming of the hardest kind that he might have more to overcome. His life became very much like that of an English country gentleman; he took a paternal interest in the welfare of his laborers and poor neighbors; he studied the details of the work done on his land; he bred horses,

cattle, and sheep, and found keen delight in his racing-stable.

Among other qualities that make the life of Commodore Perkins worth consideration was his faithfulness to duty. This was shown when as midshipman he sailed on the *Cyane* and the *Release* and as the first lieutenant on the *Cayuga* and the *Pensacola*, as well as during the later years when with higher rank he was given a ship of his own. He writes of himself in the Civil War as keeping at the same slight weight he had at the Naval Academy, 115 pounds; he was still "Puck" or "Perk" to the officers who had known him during the earlier years. Yet he was strong and well made, and underwent without difficulty the hardships incident to duty or to a hunting expedition in the wilds. The men who served under him were deeply impressed by his courage, and gave him not only prompt obedience, but the full measure of confidence such as the greatest leaders have excited. They were willing to follow him into any danger without flinching. He was seldom severe, yet he was quick to detect the man who was shirking and treated him with but small tolerance. He was clear and positive in his orders, and in return

obtained service marked by exactness and precision. The loyalty of the men lightened the officer's work, and there was reason for the pride and satisfaction with which he often spoke of his detail or ship.

Well combined with his careful performance of duty in the days of preparation and waiting, there stands his absolute fearlessness at the time of critical action, and it was for his bravery that he was recognized throughout the service. He is to be classed with Cushing in his coolness at the all-important moment, when he would meet the crisis with the same zest and splendid nerve that a good oarsman might enter a race. He showed as little anxiety connected with his personal safety or hesitation occasioned by doubt of the result as did the renowned Nelson. Running the forts at New Orleans, walking unarmed with Captain Bailey through the angry mob in that city, fighting the Confederate batteries with the *New London*, hanging to the dread *Tennessee* as he pounded away at her stern — all were a game to him, and his own strength increased according to the strength of his opponent. Thus, although Perkins was not a great student of the science of war, and it is

doubtful whether if he had had the opportunity he would have developed into a strategist, he was eminently a good fighting captain. On this point we have Farragut's own words, which are the more impressive because commonly he was so sparing in his commendation. Such praise was scarcely less than a brevet and we make no apology for again quoting it: "No braver man ever trod a ship's deck; . . . his work in the *Chickasaw* did more to capture the *Tennessee* than all the guns of the fleet put together."

It is delightful to find coupled with his bravery great modesty. When the fleet had passed the forts below New Orleans, the publishing of his letter to the home folks that so vividly described the action caused him a painful shrinking and annoyance that is to us amusing. He was ever impatient on hearing his own praise, and probably for this reason was little given to reminiscing. When shortly before his retirement Miss Perkins determined to collect his letters and to print them for private circulation at her own expense, she received no encouragement. The aged mother, whom the Commodore so much resembled, thought it "not proper or modest." He heartily agreed with this sentiment, and

further protested that it was a great nuisance when Miss Susan asked that he explain references and allusions in his letters or in other ways add to her material. The utmost he could do was to treat with a kindly tolerance her "foolishness," which became the subject of many a good-natured jest.

Such a man it is a delight for posterity to honor. It is appropriate that a bronze statue of Commodore Perkins should have been placed in the grounds of the State House at Concord, ten miles from his birthplace. It is the work of the eminent sculptor, Daniel Chester French, and represents the officer during his later years, in full uniform, standing resolute and fearless in the service of his country. And it is fitting that a replica of this noble statue should be at the United States Naval Academy, where it has been placed in Bancroft Hall, the midshipmen's quarters, on the broad balcony looking out upon Chesapeake Bay. The moment the statue at the Academy was unveiled, May 29, 1911, a long black warship lying off the sea wall a few hundred yards distant began firing a salute. It was the new torpedo-boat destroyer *Perkins*. In thus naming her, the grateful Government conferred

one of the highest honors it could bestow on the memory of George Hamilton Perkins. It placed him on the roll of our most distinguished naval heroes for whom torpedo boats and torpedo-boat destroyers have been named. It is easy to imagine Perkins's utter surprise had he been told that his name was thus to be linked with that of Farragut and Porter, as well as Cushing, Foote, Flusser, Morris, Smith, and Worden, of the Civil War; Hull, Lawrence, Macdonough, and Perry, of the War of 1812; and Barry, Biddle, and Paul Jones, of the Revolution.

THE END

INDEX

INDEX

Accessory Transit Co., 37, 51–53.
Alice, 146.
Anderson, Larz, 285.
Anderson, Mrs. Larz, childhood, 218; travel, 254; at Webster, 264 *ff.*; marriage, 285.
Arkansas, 137–40.
Armstrong, Captain, 77, 82, 84, 104.
Aspinwall, 37 *ff.*

Bailey, Theodorus, battle of New Orleans, 111, 112, 120; demands the surrender of New Orleans, 121–28; letter on Perkins's wedding, 218.
Banks, General, 149, 152, 155.
Birkey, Henry W., 161.
Blockade duty, 165 *ff.*
Bowen, Captain, 87–89.
Bowlin, James B., 63–66.
Brooklyn, battle of New Orleans, 116; battle of Mobile Bay, 179–87.
Buchanan, Admiral, building ships, 142, 145; battle of Mobile Bay, 188–92; wounded, 192.
Butler, Benjamin, friend of Captain George, 4; embarking troops, 109, 114; expected at New Orleans, 123; at New Orleans, 139 *ff.*

Cable, George W., 124.
California gold-seekers, 42.
Cape Haytien, 56, 57.
Chalmette batteries, 120, 121.
Chalmette regiment, 119.
Chickasaw, 174 *ff.*
Circassian, 170, 171.
Craven, T. A. M., 180, 184, 194.
Craven, Thomas T., 28–33.
Crosby, Schuyler, 286, 287.
Cuba, 146.
Cyane, 38 *ff.*

Daniel Wood, 214.
Dewey, George, at the Naval Academy, 35; battle of New Orleans, 117; lighthouse inspector, 219; victory at Manila, 285; at the Algonquin Club, 286.

Eads, James B., 173.
Emery, Benjamin, 4.
Essex, 139, 140, 156, 157.

Fairfax, D. M., 134 *ff.*
Farragut, David G., eager to attack New Orleans, 108–10; passes Forts Jackson and St. Philip, 115 *ff.*; plans to destroy the *Arkansas*, 137; comment on the accident to the *New London*, 159; battle of Mobile Bay, 172 *ff.*; praises Perkins, 205, 206.
Foster, Roger, 264, 269–81.
Foster, Mrs. William L., 55, 71.

Gaines, Fort, 178, 195, 198.
George, Clara Bartlett. *See Mrs. H. E. Perkins.*

George, John H., 4.
George, Paul R., 4.
Gov. Moore, 117–19.
Granger, General, 179, 198, 201.
Granite City, 166–68.
Grant, President, 248–53.

Harriman, Captain, 4.
Harrison, Captain, 118, 131, 132, 134.
Hartford, battle of New Orleans, 114–21; battle of Mobile Bay, 180–91; Perkins in command, 253, 254.
Hesseltine, Lieutenant-Colonel, 168.
Higgins, Colonel, 129.

Ingomar, 196.

Jackson, Fort, 108 *ff.*
Jenkins, T. A., 154, 195, 202, 209, 212.
Johnson, Commander, 253.
Johnston, J. D., 192, 193.
Jouett, James E., 201, 207.

Kennon, Beverly, 119.
Kibby, 88.
Kirkland, W. A., 210.

Lackawanna, battle of Mobile Bay, 187–89; in the Pacific, 212–17.
Lamson, Captain, 167.
Laurens, Captain, 100.
LeRoy, Captain, 193.
Lindsay, Mr., 130.
Lockwood, Henry H., 19, 20.
Louisiana, 113.
Louis Napoleon, 130.
Lovell, General, 121–28.

McDonough, Captain, 84–87.
Mahan, A. T., 163.
Manassas, 113, 117, 118.
Manhattan, 176, 179–81, 185, 188, 189, 201.
Mary Sorley, 168–70, 177.
Mather, Increase, 2.
Metacomet, 185, 207, 208.
Midway Islands, 214–17.
Mississippi, 111, 115–17.
Mobile Bay, battle of, 172 *ff.*
Monongahela, 156, 158, 159, 189.
Morgan, Fort, 178 *ff.*
Morris, Commodore, 147, 151, 160.
Mosher, 116.

New London, 153–59.
New Orleans, battle below, 107 *ff.*
Nightingale, 87, 88.
North America, 154.

Octorara, 179–85.
Oneida, 144.

Panama, 37 *ff.*
Paraguay, 63 *ff.*
Parker, W. G., 57.
Peaslee, Charles H., 13.
Penniman, 166.
Pensacola, battle of New Orleans, 111, 115, 121; Perkins her executive officer, 147 *ff.*
Perkins, 295.
Perkins, Frank, plans for, 164; death, 213.
Perkins, George Hamilton, ancestry, 1–4; birth, 5; early love for horses, 6; in Boston, 8; troubles with study, 9–11; appointed to the Naval Academy, 12–14; life at the Academy, 16 *ff.*; summer practice cruises, 28–33; target practice, 32; difficulties at the Academy, 34, 35; in Central America, 37 *ff.*; duty on the *Cyane*, 38 *ff.*; at Cape Hay-

tien, 56, 57; duty on the *Release*, 57 *ff.*; early religious attitude, 62; in Paraguay, 63–70; hunting tigers, 67–70; on the West African coast, 71 *ff.*; promoted to passed midshipman, 71; master, 71; duty on the *Sumter*, 72 *ff.*; adventure off the Settee River, 93–96; up the Bonney River, 99; commissioned lieutenant, 106; duty on the *Cayuga*, 107 *ff.*; passing Forts Jackson and St. Philip, 115 *ff.*; facing the mob at New Orleans, 121–28; mentioned for gallantry, 132; duty on the *Pensacola*, 147 *ff.*; made lieutenant-commander, 151; commanding the *New London*, 153–59; commanding the *Sciota*, 160–71; blockading the Texas coast, 162–71; commanding the *Chickasaw*, 173 *ff.*; passing Fort Morgan, 186; engaging the *Tennessee*, 188–94; detached from the *Chickasaw*, 211; duty on the *Lackawanna*, 212–17; duty at the Boston Navy Yard, 217; marriage, 218; made commander, 218; commanding the *Relief*, 218; duty as lighthouse inspector, 219; commanding the *Ashuelot*, 219 *ff.*; in China, 220 *ff.*; in the Philippines, 229–32; visiting Siam, 232–44; with General Grant, 248–53; commanding the *Hartford*, 253, 254; leave of absence, 254; failing health, 255; retired, 255; made commodore, 255; the game of farming, 256 *ff.*; love for horses, 268; kindness to the poor, 277 *ff.*; home in Boston, 282; in Newport, 284; fatal illness, 286; funeral, 287; characterization, 289 *ff.*; statue by French, 295; U.S.S. *Perkins*, named for him, 295.

Perkins, Mrs. George Hamilton, family, 217; marriage, 218; daughter, 218; travel, 254; at "The Box," 260; Tony lost, 276; home life, 284, 290.

Perkins, Hamilton, home life, 61, 71; enters the Naval Academy, 164.

Perkins, Hamilton Eliot, education, 3; judge of probate, 3; children, 5; engages in African trade, 8; returns to Hopkinton, 8.

Perkins, Mrs. H. E., ancestry, 3, 4; children, 5; the home school, 9–11; pride in her son, 132; extreme family modesty, 294.

Perkins, Isabel. *See Mrs. Lars Anderson.*

Perkins, Roger Eliot, 2.

Perkins, Roger Eliot, influence of brother, 61; studies medicine, 164; death, 213.

Perkins, Susan, home life, 71; present from Africa, 98; assisting the Commodore, 278; the Commodore's devotion, 290; edits the Commodore's letters, 294.

Perkins, William, 1.

Philippines, 229–32.

Phythian, R. F., 35, 131.

Pierce, President, 4.

Porter, W. D., 139, 140, 148.

Powell, Fort, 178, 195–97.

Powers, James, 277, 282.

Preble, 28, 33.

Preble, Captain, 144, 146.

Princess Royal, 157.

Ray, Kate, 27, 28.

Read, Abner, 159.

Release, 57 *ff.*

Reynolds, William, 215.
Richmond, 187, 191.
Rooney, Captain, 89, 90.

St. Philip, Fort, 108 *ff.*
Saginaw, 216.
Sargent, Charles, 261, 282, 288.
Sciota, 160 *ff.*
Siam, 232–44.
Sicard, Lieutenant-Commander, 216.
Slave trade, 72 *ff.*
Soulé, Pierre, 122, 126, 128.
Stewart, Lieutenant, 76 *ff.*
Strain, Isaac C., 49, 50.
Strong, Captain, 166, 167, 202.
Sultana, 88.

Talbot, Lieutenant, 216.
Taylor, General, 152, 153.
Tecumseh, 179–84, 194.
Tennessee, 172 *ff.*
Thornton, Captain, 144.
Trowbridge, Thomas, 2.

United States Naval Academy, admission, 14; first years, 17 *ff.*; daily routine, 24.
Upshur, Admiral, 254.

Varuna, 117–19.

Walker, M. J., 259 *ff.*
Walker, William, 51–54.
Weitzel, General, 150, 156, 157.
Weld, Anna Minot. *See Mrs. George Hamilton Perkins.*
Williams, Lieutenant-Colonel, 197.
Winnebago, 176–85, 190, 201, 210.
Winona, 144, 156.

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
U . S . A